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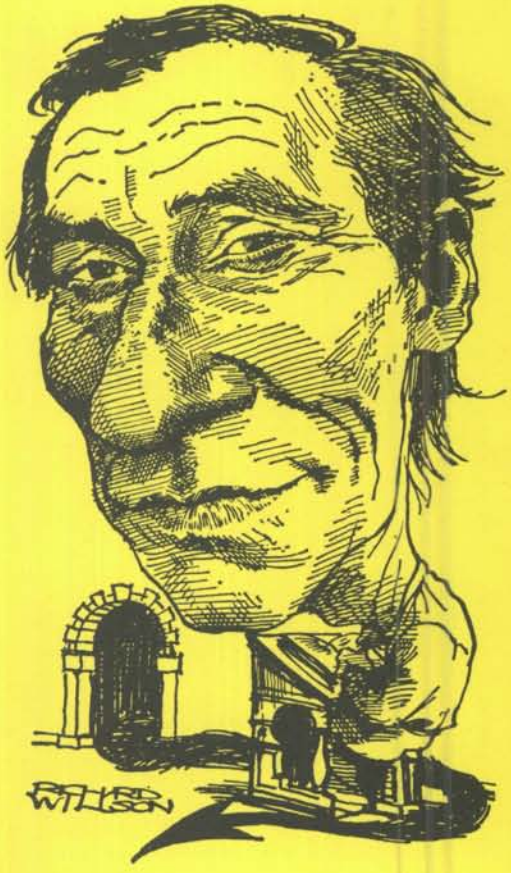
The Life of the Mind

Taking Ideas Seriously

Leszek Kolakowski

A long interview with the distinguished Polish philosopher in Oxford



By GEORGE URBAN

Edited by Melvin J. Lasky & Anthony Thwaite

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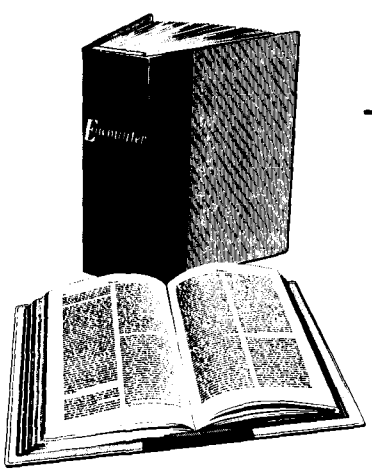

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Vilas Sarang

Return

EXPERIMENTING with different ways of relaxing his mind and limbs, he tossed about in bed. Thrusting the pillow aside, he tried sleeping with his head flat on the bed. When that didn't help, he pulled the blanket over his face, then pulled it down again when he began to suffocate. He stared at the rectangle of yellow light cast on the wall by the street-lamp. Moths must have been hovering around the lamp, for vague shadows circled in the patch of light. Thinking that it was the light that kept him awake he drew the curtains, making the room even darker. After a long while he got out of bed and groped about for a glass on the shelf. He filled it with water from the sink in the room and drank. Some time later he got up again and went to the bathroom. Getting up much later once more, he switched on the light and sat reading. After an hour or so he returned to bed hoping that he might be able to sleep at last. It went on like that until he awoke.

For a moment, Sudhir marvelled at how real it all had seemed. He really had felt as though he was suffering helplessly from insomnia. How long had the dream lasted? He felt he'd been dreaming all night, but then it occurred to him that, however long a dream might seem, it might actually have lasted only a few seconds. Perhaps he had the dream just before he woke up. Looking at the clock, he saw that it was almost eight. He had in fact slept longer than usual.

In the bathroom Sudhir noticed that his eyes burned slightly, and that he felt a bit washed out, exactly as if he had in fact spent a sleepless night. That insomnia experienced in a dream should have such palpable effects was fascinating. Then Sudhir realised that he ought to have suspected something immediately, for he never suffered from insomnia. Karen, who could seldom sleep without popping a pill, used to say to him, "How come you never have trouble getting to sleep? I know you have things to worry about, but they don't ever seem to affect your night's rest." Then Sudhir laughed and said, "It's my Oriental ability to live in peace with myself. What you Americans try to achieve through TM and Krishna-Consciousness and that kind of thing comes to me naturally." So he should have seen through the dream right away. But is it possible for the dreamer to question his dream while he is still asleep, Sudhir wondered.

The dream continued to linger in his mind even after he was finished in the bathroom. There was something unusual about it, but he couldn't put his finger on it. Then he knew: the dream had transported him back ten years in time to his life in Bombay. The room he had tossed about sleeplessly in was the one he had back then as a lodger, studying for the M.A. That room, like the one in the dream, had a wash-basin in one corner, and, as in the dream, the street-lamp used to throw a rectangular patch of light upon the wall. The room he had dreamed about was doubtless the same one, for where had he slept in a room with a wash-basin since he came to America? But it was remarkable that that shabby room in Bombay should reappear in his dreams after so many years. He would have thought that the room, like much of his life in those days, was lost in oblivion. And yet it had now surfaced from some neglected corner of his mind, coming to life in minute detail. Was it because he was finally returning to India after all these years? Perhaps his mind was struggling to restore its ties with the past.

Sudhir checked his suitcases once again, though he had packed things to his satisfaction the day before. He went over everything mentally again to see if there was still something to be taken care of. He didn't like rushing about at the last minute, or doing things sloppily. At half past nine Sudhir called Karen long distance in Buffalo, and talked for over 20 minutes. "Come back if you're bored with

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India", Karen said. As he replaced the receiver it occurred to him that he had probably heard Karen's voice for the last time in his life.

HE SAT for an hour in his favourite chair, stretching his legs out before him. Then Abhijit called: "We're leaving at eleven-thirty, right? It's two and a half hours to New York. It's good to start a little early, though."

"I'm all set. I'll be waiting for you", Sudhir said.

Patricia came along with Abhijit to say goodbye. Sudhir blushed a little when she kissed him lightly on the cheek. Even after eight years in this country he hadn't quite got used to it; deep in his mind Hindu taboos were still alive.

Dropping Patricia off on the way, the two hit the road for New York. Sudhir reminded Abhijit about the apartment key, the telephone bill, and one or two other small things. "Don't worry", Abhijit said. "I'll take care of everything."

They stopped for hamburgers at a McDonald's. "The last Great American Meal", Sudhir said with mock pomposity. Abhijit laughed. Sudhir gazed at the huge sign proclaiming SEVEN BILLION SOLD. I'll be back in India and they'll go right on selling their millions and billions, Sudhir thought.

Abhijit drove in silence. Sudhir didn't speak either. His eyelids were heavy with the feeling of not having slept well, and the car's motion made him even more drowsy. Then Abhijit said, "Write when you get there. Just let me know you're okay. Don't say anything about how things are in the country; the letter might not make it."

"Oh, you're too cynical", Sudhir said. "They're not that strict any more."

Abhijit shrugged his shoulders.

"You wouldn't think of returning yourself, then", Sudhir said.

"Oh no, certainly not. It's okay for you. But I happen to be working actively for 'Free India.' There's no way I can go back—not until the régime changes."

As a matter of fact, they had talked along these lines a number of times before.

Sudhir's plane took off from Kennedy airport at half past four. He was flying in a Boeing-747 for the first time. When he flew from Bombay to New York eight years ago the 747 was not yet widely used. Sudhir had a seat somewhere in the middle of a row. There were so many seats to each row that the windows on either side seemed a long way off. Sudhir didn't like the airplane at all; it seemed to have been made for the sole purpose of herding as many people on as possible. It didn't matter much, though, because all he wanted to do was sleep. Asking his neighbour to tell the stewardess not to bother him, Sudhir shut his eyes, and only awoke when the plane was nearing London. Rubbing his eyes he got up and went to wash. As the plane banked in its descent, Sudhir had a wonderful view of the city of London brilliantly lit with thousands of lights. He was fortunate enough to have a good connecting flight, and didn't have long to wait at the airport. On the next flight he had a window seat. It was past 4 a.m. by London time, but since he had slept well on the earlier flight Sudhir stayed awake. It was still dark outside. He stared vacantly, lost in thought.

EIGHT LONG YEARS in the US, and at last Sudhir was returning home. When he went to the States, he didn't expect to live there for that long. But within a year of his arrival there'd been a military coup in India. Like many others he was shocked at the news. Sudhir asked Abhijit, who had just arrived, "How did it happen? I never thought anything like that could happen in India. I used to think Indians would never put up with military rule."

"Well", Abhijit said, "that's how one feels until it actually happens. Once the upheaval is a reality people who used to say they couldn't live under a dictatorship shut up and go about their business as if nothing unusual had happened. And what makes India so special anyway? Look at the foreign students here—Africans, Latin Americans, the ones from the Middle East, and from South-east Asia—in practically everyone's country there's a dictatorship of one kind or another. It was bound to happen to India some day."

At first there had been no strong reaction to the military takeover by Indians in the US. But voices of protest emerged as news of repression at home began to arrive. The Indians who had jobs in the US, and who had acquired immigrant status, didn't show much concern; but the students adopted a militant posture. The Indian students' associations in many

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universities expressed indignation at the developments. Even some officers of the national Association of Indian Students in America were openly critical. Then the Indian Embassy pressured them out of office and made sure the organisation remained harmless. The rebellious students formed a new organisation called "Free India." They distributed leaflets and broadsides publicising stories of repression at home. Sudhir, who had little interest in politics, joined the movement in a moment of fervour, but quit within a year.

Sooner or later every Indian student faced the prospect of returning home. In the first flush of outrage many had been vocal in their opposition to the new régime, confident that it would crumble within a year or so, and that they would then return home in triumph. Contrary to their expectations, the new government's grip on the country tightened. How could one go back now? Even those who hadn't voiced opposition were unwilling to return, knowing that life would be difficult in the changed circumstances, and that their careers might suffer. Worse prospects confronted those who had actively expressed opposition. A few such students had not been heard from after their return to India. There were rumours that they had been thrown into jail and tortured. Even students who had stayed away from politics were frightened by news of this kind. Since a majority of them had been hostile, the Indian government looked upon all returning students with mistrust. This made returning difficult for everyone.

But there was also the difficulty of remaining in the US. Those on student visas were naturally expected to leave once they had finished their studies. It was no easy thing to find a job, the employment situation in the US was getting worse, and the government had more or less stopped giving immigrant status to foreign students. Sudhir completed his work for the PhD in four-and-a-half years, and started sending out dozens of job applications, to no avail. His field was mathematics, and it seemed flooded with PhDs. Without submitting his dissertation Sudhir continued mailing out applications. He was staving off the day when he would have to leave the university.

WITH FUNDS drying up, the university began to cut down on assistantships. Since Sudhir had had an assistantship for four years, his department told him they couldn't give him one any longer. He had to look for a part-time job. He worked in a cafeteria for a while, then found a job in the university library. The library was a giant match-box: eleven immense floors crammed with books, and with no windows. Once you entered the building you had no idea if it was raining or snowing outside, or whether the external world had been annihilated. Sudhir's job was to collect books from the study desks, put them on carts, and shelve them. It was boring, of course, but there was plenty of opportunity for loafing. Hiding among the stacks one could browse, and pretend to be busy whenever a supervisor seemed to be approaching. Sudhir got to know a lot of books he had never come across before—books on history, geography, and so on. The large geography books filled with pictures were especially nice to leaf through. Sudhir thought of his job as a never-ending struggle with the forces of chaos. You were striving to bring about order in this closed universe by keeping everything where it belonged, and people came and took out books, creating disorder. And so the struggle continued. There were times when Sudhir dreamed of all books at rest, each in its place; with perfect order established in his universe, and with no one else in the entire building, Sudhir would glide contentedly about in the stacks, a Buddha-like smile glowing on his face. But, of course, that state of nirvana could never become reality.

Months passed, and then years. Clinging to the university, Sudhir was just marking time. He was often filled with bitterness at wasting some of the best years of his life on a trivial job. If he returned to India, he could find a good teaching position. And how long could he keep on like this? One way of acquiring immigrant status, and of settling down, was to marry an American girl. Many Indians, including Abhijit, had done just that. Abhijit used to say to Sudhir, "Why don't you marry Karen? How long are you going to keep living in uncertainty?"

Sudhir had been at the university for seven years, which was the maximum period for completing the PhD. He received an extension for one more year, but things couldn't continue that way much longer. He would soon have to take the degree and quit. Matters were coming to a head. Sudhir knew a Bangladesh student

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who had a PhD in physics, and was living illegally in the country driving a taxi. Would he too come down to that? But an illegal stay carried the risk of arrest, which Sudhir could not face.

Then came news of a change of leadership at home. The new generals in power had announced a liberal policy. No one was to be put in jail without a trial. The President himself appealed to Indian students living abroad to return home without misgivings; the country needed their talents; their educational achievements would be rewarded; their political record would be overlooked. Those who gave an undertaking not to become involved in politics on their return would be granted clemency for their activities in the past.

People talked about the credibility of these declarations. Some believed in them, arguing that the military régime felt the necessity for a better image. Others like Abhijit said, "It's all eyewash. Don't believe a word of it."

Sudhir decided to bide his time and see what happened. He heard of a few people in other cities who went back. There were confusing reports as to whether or not they had faced trouble; some said there was no news at all from them. Sudhir wrote to a few friends at home, but their replies didn't shed much light on things. He had a talk with Abhijit, who had no intention of returning himself. Having been active in the "Free India" movement, Abhijit was sure he would be persecuted if he returned. Sudhir's case was different. He had been a member of "Free India" for only a short time, and had had no connection with the movement since. To be sure, since Abhijit was a close friend, he had sometimes helped out with reproducing handouts and the like.

In his uncertain state of mind Sudhir had sent applications to some universities at home. Then an offer came from Bombay. The urge to return grew stronger. Sudhir persuaded himself that he had been needlessly suspicious, that if he didn't go now he'd have only himself to blame for missing a fine chance, all because of a lack of courage. For a few days his mind was in turmoil; then he wrote to Bombay saying he would come. He started packing.

AFTER A STOPOVER in Rome, the plane took off for Bombay. Sudhir leafed through a few magazines, since there wasn't much to see outside. The plane was flying over a bank of white cumulus. But, passing over the Middle East, Sudhir saw burning gas flaming in the vast sands below. He had seen the flames one night eight years ago, travelling the other way. At the time he didn't know what the flames were, and had wondered if houses were on fire. He hadn't known that the flames had anything to do with oil, for in those days people had little awareness of the Middle East and its oil. In the intervening years these had become everyday conversation points. How times change, Sudhir thought.

It was the monsoon season in India, and the weather changed as the plane approached Bombay. The ride became bumpy as the plane entered rain clouds. Then the sea was behind them and, as the plane emerged from the clouds from time to time, one had glimpses of the land. The hills near Bombay looked emerald green, and the fields were flooded. It had obviously been raining for quite some time.

The plane was approaching the airport, and began its descent. Long rows of shanty huts near the airport were now visible. After eight years, Sudhir was seeing the slums again. They clearly hadn't been reduced under the new régime, but seemed in fact to have spread. Sudhir watched intently as the plane circled above the airport. Suddenly an odd craving came over him—a craving for Bombay duck, a kind of fish seldom found except along the Bombay coast. Sudhir wondered if it was the season for Bombay duck; after eight years he couldn't quite remember. Then there was a thud of wheels, and the plane had landed at Santacruz airport.

Sudhir's nose was suffused with damp, salty air as soon as he stepped out of the plane. He realised it would be some time before he got accustomed to the warm, humid climate of Bombay. The airport building had been enlarged, Sudhir noticed. At one end construction was still in progress. Inside the airport things seemed to be working better than in the old days. There was little to remind one of the confusion and disorder of the past. Since he was returning for good after a long residence abroad, Sudhir was sure he would get through customs without much difficulty. Then he saw that in front of customs there was a barrier with the sign, "Security Check." The security inspector rummaged through Sudhir's bags.

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Picking up the magazines, he looked at the names: *Scientific American, Psychology Today*. He put them down. Then he took out the cassette tapes. "What do you have here?" he asked.

"Music", Sudhir said. "Mostly rock. Bob Dylan and that kind of thing, you know." The tapes weren't bought pre-recorded; Sudhir had recorded them himself.

"We'll check these", the inspector said. "Come back in three or four days. If you want them mailed, give us your address." He immediately wrote a receipt for the tapes. Then he looked at Sudhir's passport more closely. Student in the US. For how long? Eight years. Eight years? Yes.

"Go over there and take a seat, please", the inspector motioned him to a room on the left. "I'll keep your passport for now."

Sudhir picked up his bags, went into the room and sat on a long bench stretching from one end of the room to the other. On the opposite side there was an identical bench. A long, wide table was placed in the middle of the room. Alone in that large room, Sudhir gazed at the President's picture hanging on the opposite wall.

HALF AN HOUR passed, but no one came. Annoyed, Sudhir kept looking at his watch every few minutes. Another fifteen minutes went by. He wanted to get up and go outside to ask what was happening, but thought better of it. Wiping off the perspiration he leaned on the arm of the bench. In the sticky monsoon weather he perspired even while resting. After about an hour a policeman walked in. "Let's go", the policeman said.

Sudhir was ushered into an officer's room. His passport was on the desk, next to a thick register. Behind the officer's chair stood a long row of similar registers. There was one vacant space in the row. The officer asked more or less the same questions the inspector had earlier, but in greater detail. Then he became absorbed in the register before him. As he watched the officer's balding head, Sudhir suddenly said, "I must join the university as early as possible; I'm already late. The term began over two weeks ago." Then he immediately wondered if he had said the wrong thing. Why had he mentioned that? The officer hadn't said anything about detaining him.

Raising his eyes from the register, the officer laughed loudly. "Don't worry about that", he said. "The university has been locked for the last two weeks. It's not likely to reopen soon."

The officer turned the pages of the register for a while. Then he called someone. A policeman entered and saluted. "Take this gentleman to the Inquiry Block", the officer told the man as he handed Sudhir his passport.

The Inquiry Block wasn't far. Sudhir had heard about a new five-star hotel that had been built near the airport; the Inquiry Block was close by the hotel. From their van, Sudhir could see the large hotel windows shining in the evening light.

The officer in the Inquiry Block took Sudhir's passport, summoned a policeman and told him something. Turning to Sudhir he said, "This man will take you upstairs." Sudhir hesitated for a moment, then asked, "Can I take my bags with me?" "Certainly", the officer said. "This isn't a prison. Think of it as a sort of hotel."

The policeman opened a room on the first floor for Sudhir, then showed him where the bathroom was. When he was gone, Sudhir shut the door and sat on the edge of the bed. Then he removed his shoes and lay down. All the fatigue of travelling seemed suddenly to have overcome him. It grew dark in the room.

Sudhir got up from the bed and switched on the light. He went to the window and looked out through the large horizontal bars. Outside the compound there was an open sewer, and beyond it were the huts of the slum, where women were busy cooking evening meals. Small fires burned, and streams of smoke arose. Children shouted and ran in front of the huts. In the distance, lights had come on in the five-star hotel. The revolving restaurant on top of the hotel was apparently not yet open, for it was still dark.

Returning to bed, Sudhir tried reading a magazine. He got up once and went to the bathroom at the end of the hall. Walking back he watched the policeman seated at the other end of the passage. A light burned just above the man's head, so that his face remained dark, but the smoke rising from his cigarette looked luminous.

Sudhir's watch was still set for London time, since he had forgotten to reset it at the aiport. He calculated the difference now and turned the hands. At half past eight there was a knock

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on the door. A man entered, set down a meal tray, and went out without saying a word. Sudhir looked at the tray: flat bread, a helping of rice, a bowl of lentil soup, and some sort of curried vegetable. His first Indian meal.

AROUND TEN Sudhir changed for the night and switched off the light. It was good to go to bed early. The long trip had been quite tiring. It would help to be fresh the next morning. After an hour or so, Sudhir felt unusually thirsty; he went to the wash-basin and drank a glass of water. Then he stood before the window in the dark. It was silent in the slum huts, and the revolving restaurant above the hotel shone with light. One couldn't actually see it turning, but after a while Sudhir found that it had in fact moved slightly. A light in one of the hotel rooms went off and came back on the next moment, as though it had blinked. Sudhir remembered working on the late shift in the library. The library closed at midnight, and a few minutes before closing the lights were blinked on and off three times as a signal to everyone inside. Three times in quick succession, though only for a few seconds, everything was plunged into total darkness. Sudhir had never quite got used to it. Every time it happened it gave him a start.

Back in bed, Sudhir looked at the luminous dial of his watch: half past twelve. It was hard for him to get to sleep because of the time change. His limbs craved rest, but it was as though his body had forgotten how to relax. Much later he rose again, and switching on the light, went to the wash-basin. He splashed cold water in his face, then sat on the edge of the bed drying off. It was a quarter past two by his watch. It was drizzling outside, and a child wailed in the slums.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, Sudhir sensed that there was something odd about this room, but he couldn't identify it. Then it struck him: a room with a wash-basin, just like in the dream. To be sure, the room he was in now wasn't exactly like the one in the dream, but now too he was restlessly trying to get to sleep. He wanted to laugh aloud. It was all clear now: he was dreaming the dream again. With a few changes, the story was being repeated. He knew dreams often repeated themselves in that way. For years his father had been haunted by a recurring dream in which he found himself perched on top of a temple, encircled by flood waters rising almost to his feet.

When did he last fall asleep? On the flight from New York to London. And he was still asleep. Everything that seemed to have happened after that was all part of the dream, an anxiety dream that was quite natural given his situation. Suddenly he experienced a tremendous sense of release. It all seemed fascinating now. And he had only to wait for the dream to end. It would end, and then he would get up, wash, and wait for the plane to land. Switching off the light, Sudhir lay down again. He didn't stir when, some time later, there was a knock on the door. Then there was another knock, louder. Sudhir got out of bed, switched on the light and opened the door. A lean, middle-aged man wearing glasses looked up at him and smiled broadly. "Oh, you're awake", he said. "I thought you'd be fast asleep. I brought along a master key, thinking I'd have to let myself in to wake you up."

Sudhir glanced at his watch: it was five minutes to four. On such occasions, Sudhir thought, one usually expects two heavy-set men in uniforms, with steely faces. The man standing before him had the look of a petty office clerk, with a cheap, white shirt and well-worn trousers.

"Come on. We want to ask you a few questions", the man said. "You know, this sort of job is best done at this hour. It's quicker, for one thing. Get dressed; I'll wait for you."

This dream is becoming too complicated, Sudhir thought with annoyance, as he walked down the hall behind the man with glasses. They walked mechanically in the silence of the night, as in a dream. From one of the rooms came a faint sound of moaning. "Sounds like someone's ill, doesn't it?" Sudhir said casually. The man with glasses didn't seem to have heard.

Sudhir wondered if he should scream out loud so that he could wake up, and free himself from the clutches of the dream, then get up and see how close they were to London. Then thousands of lights would shimmer brilliantly ahead, and the plane would glide towards them as though into some strange galaxy in space.

Translated from the Marathi by the author in collaboration with Breon Mitchell.

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GEORGE URBAN

A Conversation with Leszek Kolakowski

The Devil in History

I. The Party knows best

MY MENTAL IMAGE of Leszek Kolakowski has two, as I see it, complementary, faces: your attitude to Marxism, and your attitude to the Church. Let me try to approach your interpretation of Marxism indirectly—through some of the parables you have written about the Old and New Testament. What induced you as a Communist philosopher to publish a book under the title "Talk of the Devil"?

KOLAKOWSKI: This book was not meant to be a political statement. It contains various cautionary tales, each taking its cue from some episode in Holy Scripture. In each, in one way or another, the Devil makes its appearance, but my stories were not designed to offer some philosophical equivalent of a *roman à clef*. My purpose was mainly to underline the significance of the awesome paradox whereby good results may flow from evil, and evil results from good. That these two can thus support each other is a shattering fact about the human experience. But these problems may be discussed in terms broader than those offered by politics.

—You may very well not have intended these parables to contain clues to your philosophical-political thinking, but for the critical reader they are, as I see it, indubitably there. It is a significant fact about your writings that you should be so much preoccupied by Scripture—"Talk of the Devil" is a companion piece to your "The Key to Heaven"—and if I were asked to render a layman's reading of these cautionary tales I would say that your purpose is not only to lay bare the nature of evil, but to identify it in the framework of two "churches"—that of Christianity and that of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism.

KOLAKOWSKI: I did not, as I say, intend to write political stories in disguise, though in some cases I probably did. However, I spent many years studying Christian sects and heresies, especially those of the 16th and 17th centuries, and one can't do that without observing certain analogies which occur in all ideological thinking and all bodies in which such thinking is enshrined. Nevertheless, I am ready to concede that, seen from our present perspective, I have given certain hostages to the analogies you have in mind.

—Let me try to transfer your "awesome paradox" (whereby good can flow from evil and evil from good) from daily experience to our understanding of history. Where does "the devil" (so to speak) enter history, or our understanding of it?

KOLAKOWSKI: It is part of Hegelian historio-philosophy that historical events turn the intentions of historical actors into their opposites—but this is, as I say, also our run-of-the-mill daily experience. Marx and Engels had much to say about this problem. Man, they contend, is—until the début of

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a class-conscious proletariat—an object of history. He is not only unaware of the history he is making but simply *cannot* be aware of it because he finds himself in the grip of a "false consciousness" which is not just a mental fact, reversible by a mental cure, but has social roots: social processes of his own making appear to man as forces governed by superhuman powers. This grand design of the dialectic—the intentions of the makers of history being turned into the reversal of these intentions—produces certain "laws" of history. These apparently operate from the inception of the division of labour until the mid-19th century, when the arrival of the proletariat on the world scene happily coincides with the arrival of Marx and Engels as revolutionary social thinkers. From then on the proletariat, enlightened by Marxist thinking, serves as the appointed vehicle of the revolutionary dénouement of history. False consciousness is eliminated. History is no longer marred by the law of reversed intentions. The proletariat, now gripped by true consciousness, can and does translate its will into the desired results. The riddle of history is solved, man's alienation is ended, and the world moves into the era of classless society. Such, in simple outline, is the Marxist mythology.

—I can detect not one but two "devils" in your story. The first, as you have said, is the genuine problem of the frustration of human intentions, which is an experience we all share.

KOLAKOWSKI: Yes, but it *is* (I must stress this) a great evil which has preoccupied me all my life and induced me to spend time contemplating Hegel's and Marx's answers to it, with all the latter's prophetic anticipations. The second "devil" is the Marxist assumption that with the début of the proletariat as a perfectly conscious historical class the whole burden of past experience can somehow be declared null and void, and mankind consequently embarks on writing an entirely new history, history *par excellence*. Marx put this very graphically when he observed that the coming revolutions will draw their poetry from the future, not the past.

Hegel had trained the searchlight of his thinking exclusively on the past and explicitly repudiated extrapolations into the future. Marx's orientation, on the other hand, was not only futuristic, but he believed that it is with the hoped-for results of the future that we have to judge the *past*, too. This compounds the evil. Marx's view is deeply rooted in the utopianism of August Cieszkowski and Moses Hess, and thus partly in Christian Millenarianism and Jewish Messianism.

We can, I agree, say that there are two devils in my account: first, history's stubborn inclination to frustrate and reverse human ambition and, second, Marx's chimerical notion that the revolutionary movement of the world proletariat will somehow abolish all ideological, social and economic contradictions of past society and usher in the golden age.

In other words, I believe that the frustration and reversal of human foresight is a basic fact about the human condition. . .

—Which is one way of believing in original sin. . . .

KOLAKOWSKI: . . . and I am also convinced that the claim that there is a technique for overcoming this condition, or a privileged class to carry out this technique, is dangerous and misconceived.

—Every despotism worth its salt claims to have (as you have just implied) a "hot line" to God or the future. Hence their demand that the despot's orders be taken on trust: "Der Führer befehlt, wir folgen"—*"Stalin-the-genius is always right"—and so on. You have observed in several of your essays that in any theodicy Divine Providence is vindicated in spite of the existence of palpable evil—this, indeed, is the meaning of theodicy.*

> *"God, to test the faithful, now and again delivered St Peter's See into the hands of the ungodly [you write in "Marxism and Beyond"]. So much greater, then, the merit of the faithful if they bow their heads to the Divine Voice, even though it issues from the throat of Balaam's she-ass. . . ."*

If this is so, and if we take (for the sake of argument) Marxism as a substitute religion with claims similar to those of the genuine article, might a Communist not cogently reason that "the Law of History" or "Historical Necessity" sometimes delivers the leadership of the "workers' movement" into the hands of a Stalin? And might he not, further, insist that this, however, does not invalidate—much rather does it reinforce—his duty to subject himself to the orders of Stalin? Bukharin argued this kind of thing when he said (much to his later undoing): "It is not him [Stalin] we trust but the man in whom the Party has reposed its confidence. . . ."

KOLAKOWSKI: This has been the standard Communist argument. Time and again I have heard old Communists say: it is better to make mistakes *with* the Party than to be right *against* the Party. They were mostly blissfully unaware of any trace of a "theodicy" in their attitude and, from a strictly Communist point of view, there was undoubtedly something very sound in what they were saying. Without this dogged and utopian loyalty to the cause in spite of its evils, the Communist movement would not have survived. Such attitudes now hardly exist. In Russia and Eastern Europe they expired with the last ideologically motivated Communists, though in the West one encounters freak survivals of the species. But while their commitment lasted, these men would not be shaken from their unquestioning allegiance—no mistakes, wrongs and crimes of the Party could dent their conviction that the unity of even a guilty Party was a thousand times more important than frivolous considerations of "morality" and the like.

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—The existence of evil for a truly believing Christian reinforces his commitment to God, for if God were all-good in his earthly manifestations, a Christian's love of God would be a mere commercial transaction: returning love for love. But when he loves God through evil, his faith and loyalty have stood the supreme test. This is the sort of argument (echoing Luke 6, 32*) we repeatedly encounter in your writings, and I would, on the strength of it, take my analogy with Communism a step further by suggesting that a truly committed Communist* **loves** *Stalin, including Stalin's murderous deeds, because his faith in the cause, like the Christian's love of God, demands that he should will the means if he truly wills the ends. What I'm saying is that an unforgiving and unjust Party has a gruesome magnetism of its own.*

KOLAKOWSKI: Your analogy is only partly valid. Christianity does not claim that God's justice will prevail in our life in this world—that merit will be rewarded and wrong-doing punished. It holds that God's ways are inscrutable—that we cannot comprehend them by intellectual cognition alone. Christianity teaches that we must trust God's justice in spite of manifest evil and wait for justice to be done on the Day of Judgment.

Communism, by contrast, claims to be offering a scientific and empirically verifiable explanation of the whole of reality. It is not a religion but a caricature of religion which incidentally confirms the theologians' observation that the Devil is an ape of God.

Whether a committed Communist *has* to love the wrongdoings of a Stalin on the analogy you suggest seems to me more open to question.

"The tyranny of one man is ***the*** *perfect embodiment of the spirit of Communism."*

Undoubtedly most fully loyal Communists approved of and even loved Stalin's misdeeds if they were at all ready to concede that these *were* misdeeds. But many preferred to believe that nothing may be called a misdeed as long as it arguably serves the good cause. In either case, the analogy stands to the extent that a caricature, too, is an image—albeit an overdrawn one—of reality.

—You have argued in "Main Currents of Marxism" that Marx's theory that the proletariat possesses a special type of historical awareness—"cognitive privilege"—inevitably leads to the Stalinist kind of dictatorship. How does the first lead to the second?

KOLAKOWSKI: I did not say that it was inevitable, but that the Leninist version of Marxism, though not the only possible one, was quite plausible. Very briefly: Marx alleges that the working class carries, simply because it *is* the working class, a kind of privileged knowledge, "revolutionary consciousness", of the course of history (this interpretation of his words was—correctly, I believe—strongly argued by Lukács). But this cognitive privilege, while it may have existed as something much to be desired in the minds of Marx and Engels, has to this day failed to materialise in the minds of the *workers*. Lenin (and before him Kautsky) thought that this little practical difficulty could be overcome by adding a supplement to Marx's theory: since the proletariat was incapable of spontaneously generating "revolutionary consciousness", it had to be instilled from without. This was to be done by the "vanguard" of the proletariat, the Communist Party; and the Party—now sole repository of the true purpose of history—is vested with the right, indeed the duty, to discard the immature, empirical consciousness of the masses and lead them, through revolution, to the classless society. And Lenin added—which is an important point—that what the workers could produce of themselves was a bourgeois consciousness, since in a capitalist society only two basic forms of consciousness could exist.

The implication of this theory is that the Party knows better what lies in the genuine interests of society, and what constitutes the will of society, than society itself, and once the spirit of the Party is incarnated in the will of one man, Marxism-Leninism comes to mean the dictatorship of one man *over* the proletariat. Thus Marx's hypothesis that the working class has a privileged knowledge of the final purpose of history culminates in the assertion that Comrade Stalin is always right.

—Wouldn't the theodicy, Marxist-style, in that case still apply? Suppose we equate the "Historical Mission of the Proletariat", as conceived by Marx, with Divine Providence, and the despotism of Stalin with palpable evil—wouldn't Marx's vision (God's love) still be vindicated under the injunction: do what Stalin orders you to do because his sin is felix culpa *in the service of a higher good?*

Repeatedly you stress in your books that a Christian loves God because he has faith, not because he expects to be rewarded. The act of believing is the whole justification of faith. The more evil God appears to be the more the Christian reaffirms his faith in Him. Stalinism is then—I would infer by way of a parallel—a special manifestation of Marxism, and a believing Communist simply reaffirms his faith in Marx's vision by obeying and supporting Stalin.

KOLAKOWSKI: I must enter a correction—Christianity teaches that God can test the faithful by letting them suffer, but He cannot show Himself to be evil. And the analogy does not hold good for another reason: Stalinism is not an incidental evil which somehow superimposed itself on an otherwise benign vision. On the contrary: the tyranny of one man, the worship of a personalised ideology and the power-structure derived from it, is *the* perfect embodiment of the spirit of Communism. Stalin's rule is the rule of Communism *par excellence*. All other variants of Communism-in-

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power are half-baked, diluted, timorous, immature or senile by comparison. Since the death of Stalin, Soviet Communism has not been able to regain its health, though as far as the institutional framework is concerned, the legacy of Stalinism survives intact.

—If the institutional incarnation is intact, why could Stalinism not survive Stalin?

KOLAKOWSKI: Because, under Stalin, the police-terror, the purges and massacres affected too many members of the *apparat*. That they affected the people at large would not have mattered, because the population as such is of no importance in the Soviet system, but the continuing insecurity of the *apparat* was intolerable. Nobody was safe. Members of the Central Committee and the heads of Stalin's various satrapies could be imprisoned and executed with as little fuss and on as little evidence as the man in the street. When Stalin died, the Soviet establishment took care not to saddle itself with another dictator of the stamp of Stalin.

II. Totalitarianism & Socialism

I AM INTERESTED in tracing the development of your attitude to the totalitarian element in Marxism. Some twenty years before you wrote "Main Currents of Marxism" (i.e. in your revisionist phase as a Communist), you suggested in a number of different formulations that for any worthwhile social change to be achieved one's targets have to be set way beyond the hoped-for change because mankind is slow and ruled by inertia. Hence, you argued, utopian social thinking should not surprise us—we have to aim for outsize objectives and employ the rhetoric of inflated hopes in order to achieve modest results. Indeed you repudiated the caution of commonsensical objectors: "an excess of common sense may be inimical to an effective fight."

If all this is true (and here, too, you reflect the words of the New Testament, e.g. Luke 12, 31*), where would you draw the line between idealism and blindness, enthusiasm and suicide? Couldn't Stalinism, and any dictatorship that claims to be working for social change (and which does not?), draw on your reasoning to justify its existence?*

KOLAKOWSKI: I would endorse this line of thought now only with very great reservations. I still insist that often it is only by aiming for what is now impossible that we are likely to attain the possible. But any social Utopia which purports to offer a technical blueprint for the perfect society now strikes me as pregnant with the most terrible dangers. I am not saying that the idea of human fraternity is ignoble, naive or futile; and I don't think it would be desirable to discard it as belonging to an age of innocence. But to go to the length of imagining that we can design some plan for the whole of society whereby harmony, justice and plenty are attained by human engineering is an invitation for despotism. I would, then, retain Utopia as an imaginative incentive ("regulative idea" would be the Kantian phrase for it) and confine it to that.

—Your emphasis, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, that Utopia is necessary but also necessarily unattainable, marks an important point in your revisionism. To call the Communist blueprint "utopian" and to add in the same breath that the labours of mountains will give birth to a small mouse was, it seems to me, your way of striking an uneasy compromise between approval and complete rejection of the Marxist vision.

KOLAKOWSKI: I suppose it was, but this is now a long way behind me. A society without conflict is a figment of the imagination. Evil is continuous throughout the human experience. The point is not how to make one immune to it, but under what conditions one may identify and curtail the devil.[1] We are not faced with a choice between a perfect and imperfect society—our options are between one sort of imperfection and another. Yet, in order to realise that gradations exist between the two, we have to keep alive a certain regulative idea of perfection as an ideal standard against which we can measure our failures and achievements.

—Are you entirely happy with rejecting Utopia as a normative idea? You did (again in your middle period) repeatedly observe that Utopia on the Left is a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy: "Utopia crosses over from the domain of . . . moral thought into the field of practical thinking, and itself begins to govern action. . . ." In another instance you say that the Left can never renounce Utopia "because goals that seem unattainable now will never be reached unless they are articulated when they are still unattainable. . . ."

I believe these are historically well-attested observations. I also believe that you are now right in stressing that the "blueprint type of Utopia" is dangerous. Yet our experiences with the Third World, for example, suggest one significant lesson, namely that the developing majority of mankind seems to want, and want desperately, a seamless type of Utopia of the kind you now reject. The magnetism for the Third World of the Marxist-Leninist type of vision of the perfect society has been overwhelming, even though, in most cases, it amounted to no more than a convenient label for a "quick fix" towards modernisation.

Two questions follow. First, is it within the realm of the possible that the underdeveloped, under-nourished, and under-housed majority of mankind will understand the perils of the "blueprint type" of Communist Utopia—that Arabs and Iranians will cease to see the West as their principal adversaries and shift their hostility to that mother and father of all blueprints—the Soviet Union? Second, if in the Third World ***some*** *Utopian target-setting is an unavoidable necessity, can the Western democracies offer a kind of "Utopia for export" that*

[1] Leszek Kolakowski, "Can the Devil be Saved?", ENCOUNTER, July 1974.

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might appeal? Could it be done without making nonsense of what democracy stands for?

KOLAKOWSKI: If some millenarian fever seizes a large part of society, little can be done. But millenarianism is not a normal condition. What people in the Third World would seem to seek is not paradise but the means to cope with misery and starvation, even though it is true that extreme despair may breed chiliastic illusions. The West *has* no "Utopia for export", as you put it, and it would be foolish to try to devise one. It can offer no instantaneous, patent answers to the problems of over-population, the ungovernability of giant cities, soil-erosion, and similar calamities. What it can do is offer very complex, piecemeal and uncertain advice, and show through irrefutable examples that totalitarian solutions are not only most unpleasant, but that they do not work in either the First, the Second, or the Third World.

—You have stressed in your recent writings that socialism is the prerequisite for any fully effective totalitarian system—that dictatorships and despotisms of various ferocity can arise, and have arisen, in a variety of non-socialist environments, but that a fully totalitarian dictatorship must have socialism for its base. Wouldn't Sparta under the constitution of Lycurgus and Hitler's Germany (to take two random examples) rather challenge your theory, unless, of course, we grotesquely stretched the word "socialism" to cover certain Spartan and National Socialist institutions?

KOLAKOWSKI: The point where despotism differs from totalitarianism is the destruction of civil society. But civil society cannot be destroyed until and unless private property, including the private ownership of all the means of production, is abolished. As long as large numbers of people exist whose livelihood and conduct of life are independent from the state, your tyranny—hard and bloodthirsty though it may be—cannot be totalitarian. Stalin was fully aware of this when he decided to liquidate the independent peasants as a class. The totalitarian ideal could not be achieved without the collectivisation of the peasantry—without the destruction of a class of people who constituted among them a large part of civil society and were not at the mercy of the state. Once this class had been liquidated at the cost of several million lives, the state, with its artificial ties embracing the whole of an atomised and terrorised society, became omnipotent. It is in this sense that I argued that a totalitarian society has the best chances of fulfilling the ideal in a socialist economy. At the end of the process the individual became the property of the state. This does not mean, though, that all forms of public ownership open the road to totalitarianism. There are many examples which show that civil liberties and democratic institutions can coexist with extensive nationalisation.

No absolutely fireproof totalitarian system has yet been devised, but the Stalinist and Maoist models have come very close to translating the "entelechy" of totalitarianism into reality. Nazi Germany, on the other hand, and Fascist Italy were imperfect totalitarianisms (Mussolini's Italy, to be sure, much more imperfect than Hitler's Reich); Hitler was satisfied with the subordination of the existing forms of economic activity to the internal needs and imperial ambitions of the state, instead of expropriating and nationalising all means of production. Nor have most of the Soviet Union's East European dependencies achieved the Soviet level of totalitarianism. In spite of all attempts to impose uniformity through pressure or—as in the cases of Hungary and Czechoslovakia—armed intervention, there are more and more cracks in the East European glacis of the Soviet empire.

Fortunately, much in the make-up of human beings resists the pressures of totalitarian control.

"If everyone stopped participating in the mendacity, the Communist system would at once collapse."

Family life, emotional and sexual relationships, individual and collective memory, art and literature escape to a certain extent the impact of the system. This holds, as we now know, even for the most regimented society we have yet seen: Communist China where, under Mao, a great effort was made either completely to destroy family life and personal relations, or to subordinate them to the goals and ideology of the state—so much so that the Maoists under the Cultural Revolution exceeded anything the Soviet system under Stalin managed to achieve in terms of the *Gleichschaltung* of the individual. Yet the spirit of liberty survived.

—Your critique of Communist totalitarianism is matched by your exposure of the immorality of supporting any political philosophy which claims historical inevitability. The case you argue is simple enough: if society is ineluctably heading for a classless society via "socialism" and communism—as Marxism claims—then the individual is not showing any kind of moral choice or courage in supporting "socialism" because he is simply betting on a horse which is absolutely certain to win. You, of course, have put it much better in "The Opiate of the Demiurge" ("Marxism and Beyond", 1968):

> *"He who joins the struggle for socialism sustained by an unwavering certainty of victory is merely betting on a number at which history's roulette wheel is, in his opinion, bound to stop. His actions are morally worthless. . . ."*

Now, this is projecting your own high standards of political morality on to the average mortal It is, I think, as well to admit that the ordinary citizen, certainly in the West, has no such yardstick to support his political

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choices. Indeed, his choice is grounded in a carefully calculated ***immorality****, for the first question he asks of any political cause clamouring for his support is: "Is it likely to succeed?" And if it is not, he will probably withhold his support—morality or no morality.*

Aren't you, therefore, gearing your expectations of Soviet and East European behaviour to an exceptionally, and perhaps unfairly, high pitch?

KOLAKOWSKI: I would certainly insist that it is reprehensible to support any political cause for no better reason than the certainty of its triumph. But, of course, in practical life this is not the kind of consideration a Soviet or East European citizen is likely to worry about. He is, nevertheless, often in a position of being able to choose between a profound and manifest evil, and one which is less so. In that case it is his duty to opt for a course which is less likely to do damage, less likely to interfere with liberty, human dignity, the maintenance of national values, than the alternative choice or choices. I realise that there is nothing very dignified about limiting one's practical expectations to such pedestrian alternatives; but these are the only ones available for the time being. Let me put this somewhat differently: I am deeply suspicious of the "package deal" type of political choice whereby we are told to accept a party, or movement, or political philosophy, lock-stock-and-barrel—the good with the less good and outright evil as parts of an interdependent whole. This is a dangerous prescription, likely to justify any choice, because we know well enough that on sober analysis each has points which commend it for our acceptance and others which we find unacceptable. This goes *a fortiori* for one-party states.

—What moral guidelines would you, then, offer, to men and women living under a Communist system?

KOLAKOWSKI: Having lived outside the system for many years now, I am not in a position to give advice to people who have to take risks. You will no doubt remember Solzhenitsyn's warning: "Don't lie." Solzhenitsyn said this was a *minimum* requirement. I'm not so sure; for it seems to me, on second thought, more like a *maximum* requirement, because if everyone stopped participating in the mendacity, the Communist system would at once collapse.

Naturally, in everyday life, one has to differentiate and make all sorts of allowances. There is a wide spectrum of attitudes ranging from those entertained by active scoundrels participating in and benefiting from the oppressiveness and mendacity of the Communist system, to those entertained by people actively fighting the system. But in between these there are many choices. I, for one, do not condemn those men and women who, without actively opposing the system, are doing their best to widen the existing framework. In the intellectual domain, some good can be done by simply writing books of genuine merit, injecting an element of truthfulness into cultural life, and refusing to go along with the official lie.

III. The Lie in Soviet Society

SCHOLARS of the "progressive" type have shown a good deal of reluctance in recent years to go on applying the concept of "totalitarianism" to the Soviet system. It has been argued that the concept is dated; that the Soviet system is in reality a modernising economy fighting off a set of especially debilitating handicaps: that we ought to approach the study of the Soviet Union in the spirit of disinterested enquiry, "in a technical framework . . . functionally", institution for institution, enterprise for enterprise. Would you agree?

KOLAKOWSKI: I would not. I am aware of no historical or political analysis that has discredited the concept, while I *do* know of a large body of scholarly studies which *confirms* the opinion that the concept is rightly applied to the Soviet Union even though, since the death of Stalin, Soviet totalitarianism has been an ailing totalitarianism, less than fully effective.

—We might test the validity of the application of "totalitarianism" to the Soviet system by measuring the Soviet Union against Professor Carl J. Friedrich's five basic traits which, so he tells us (in his "Totalitarianism", 1954), mark off a totalitarian society from one which is not so. One could, of course, test it against various other criteria, too, such as Max Eastman's "twenty ways" in which (as he argued in "Stalin's Russia") Stalin beats Hitler; but I prefer Friedrich because Eastman wrote his book in 1940, before, that is, Hitler committed his worst crimes. Also, as a former Trotsky sympathiser, Eastman is susceptible to the accusation that he over-compensates for his earlier commitments.

Carl Friedrich lists five clusters of traits which I shall summarise in shorthand. First, an all-pervading ideology which claims to offer ***the*** *perfect final society for the whole of mankind.*

KOLAKOWSKI: True for the Soviet system.

—Second, a single party organised in a hierarchical manner, usually under a single leader, superior to or commingled with the government bureaucracy.

KOLAKOWSKI: Applies to the Soviet Party.

—Third, the complete monopoly of all means of effective armed combat, that is, the police, the border forces, the army, navy and air force.

KOLAKOWSKI: Applies.

—Fourth, monopoly of the control of all means of mass communication such as the press, radio, television, motion pictures, and so on.

KOLAKOWSKI: Applies.

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—Fifth, terroristic police control directed not only against demonstrable "enemies" of the régime but against arbitrarily selected classes of the population.

KOLAKOWSKI: Applies. Stalinism was all these things but it went beyond them in several important respects. Stalinism in its mature form was a unified state-organism facing atom-like individuals. With civil society virtually destroyed, everyone was supposed to become his brother's spy. The unattainable ideal of the system was a situation where all people were at the same time inmates of concentration camps *and* secret police agents—a unique combination in human affairs.

In the last stages of Stalinist totalitarianism the Party itself was destroyed. The reason, we may guess, was that many of the older members of the Party, though loyal to Stalin, were also trying to uphold at least a basic minimum of the ideology. Although they were, in all practical matters, perfectly obedient to Stalin, the *Vozhd* rightly suspected that they had their loyalties divided between himself and the ideology as they had received it from Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin himself. Even potential disloyalty was intolerable. The Party had to be taught that the ideology was what the leader at any given moment said it was. The purges and mass executions of the late 1930s, and again after the War, were not simply the work of a paranoiac. In these respects Stalinist totalitarianism has, with the possible exception of Maoism under the Cultural Revolution, no parallels.

—How much continuity was there between the Leninist and Stalinist types of totalitarianism? Scholars are strongly divided on this issue, some arguing that the link was weak or indeed that Stalinism was sui generis, *while others believe that Stalinism was the logical end-product of Leninism and even Marxism.*

KOLAKOWSKI: The Stalinist kind of totalitarianism issued directly from Leninism and that—albeit less directly—from Marxism. I cannot here go into a detailed discussion of this problem, but let me simply say this without offering evidence: I do not think that Stalinism was a necessary and unavoidable product of Marxism. But that is not saying enough. To make my position clear I would pose the question differently: "Was the Stalinist ideology a legitimate interpretation of the Marxist philosophy of history?" And my answer to *that* question is Yes. I can address myself in even stronger terms to the same problem by asking: "If one made a thorough attempt to translate the principal values of the Marxist kind of socialism into practical politics, would something like the Stalinist system be likely to emerge as the result?" And my answer to that question, too, is Yes.

—You have spoken of the atomisation of Soviet society. Where do the confessions made at the Moscow show-trials fit in? It is, on the face of it, surprising that whereas Hitler and Mussolini were content to have their enemies arrested and executed without exacting from them confessions in praise of the system, Stalin had his victims bribed or tortured to the point where they extolled the glory of the man and the power that were sending them to the gallows.

KOLAKOWSKI: Being the model dictator he was, Stalin was anxious to have his victim annihilated *morally* as well as physically. It was not enough for everyone to see that Stalin's victim was rightly hanged or shot—it was just as important to show that *the victim himself* recognised the rightness of being hanged or shot.

"Even those who somehow survived the camps nevertheless acquired a subconscious interest in supporting the lie, because they had themselves assisted in creating it."

—It was nevertheless surprising that so many could be made to indict themselves so abjectly and consistently over so long a period. I happened to be a daily earwitness to the trial of László Rajk in 1949. It taught me a lesson that I ought to have learned before but didn't, viz. that it is one thing to offer cool historical or psychological explanations from the detachment of one's ivory tower, and quite another to experience day by day, blow by blow, the slow unfolding of a web of wildly unlikely and contradictory lies and fabrications. I could sense well enough ***how*** *these men had been reduced to the state they were in. But I could not quite see* ***why*** *a victorious world power would need this kind of evidence to support its legitimacy.*

KOLAKOWSKI: Enough is by now known about the ways in which false confessions were obtained for us not to have to say any more about them. Stalin's manifest objective was to show that there was *no* mercy. The people arrested, tortured and executed in the 1948–52 period may or may not have had sympathies with some of Tito's policies, but that was not the point. The point was to drive it into the heads of every man, woman and child that the slightest deviation by deed or thought was to be punished by death, and not an easy kind of death at that. There were to be no martyrs.

Going back to the 1935–38 "Show Trials", one could conceivably understand why Stalin needed the false witness of the *Old* Bolsheviks, especially those who were brought to *public* trial (most of them were not). But why did he insist that those hundreds of thousands of small people, who were never given a trial but simply shot, should *also* go through the tortuous process of self-indictment and adulation of the Bolshevik system? No one was going to read about *their* confessions—so why do it?

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The explanation (as I see it) is simple: Stalin wanted to make all those hundreds of thousands of people *accessories* to his crimes—accessories, moreover, to crimes committed against themselves—and thus *accomplices* in a general campaign of falsification. Even those who somehow survived the camps nevertheless acquired a subconscious interest in supporting the lie, because they had themselves assisted in creating it. This is, to my mind, the root cause of the neurosis of Soviet society.

—You are, in fact, endorsing Alexander Zinoviev's reading of life in the land of "Ibansk" where truth and the lie, farce and tragedy are hopelessly interwoven.

On "Taking Ideas Seriously". . . .

KARL MARX was a German philosopher. This does not sound a particularly enlightening statement, yet it is not so commonplace as it may at first appear. Jules Michelet, it will be recalled, used to begin his lectures on British history with the words: "*Messieurs, l'Angleterre est une île.*" It makes a good deal of difference whether we simply know that Britain is an island, or whether we interpret its history in the light of that fact, which thus takes on a significance of its own. Similarly, the statement that Marx was a German philosopher may imply a certain interpretation of his thought and of its philosophical or historical importance, as a system unfolded in terms of economic analysis and political doctrine.

A presentation of this kind is neither self-evident nor uncontroversial. Moreover, although it is clear to us that Marx was a German philosopher, half-a-century ago things were somewhat different. In the days of the Second International the majority of Marxists considered him rather as the author of a certain economic and social theory which, according to some, was compatible with various types of metaphysical or epistemological outlook; while others took the view that it had been furnished with a philosophical basis by Engels, so that Marxism in the proper sense was a body of theory compounded of two or three parts elaborated by Marx and Engels respectively.

WE ARE ALL familiar with the political background to the present-day interest in Marxism, regarded as the ideological tradition on which Communism is based. Those who consider themselves Marxists, and also their opponents, are concerned with the question whether modern Communism, in its ideology and institutions, is the legitimate heir of Marxian doctrine. The three commonest answers to this question may be expressed in simplified terms as follows:

***1.* Yes, modern Communism is the perfect embodiment of Marxism, which proves that the latter is a doctrine leading to enslavement, tyranny, and crime.**

***2.* Yes, modern Communism is the perfect embodiment of Marxism, which therefore signifies a hope of liberation and happiness for mankind.**

***3.* No, Communism as we know it is a profound deformation of Marx's gospel and a betrayal of the fundamentals of Marxian socialism.**

THE FIRST ANSWER corresponds to traditional anti-Communist orthodoxy, the second to traditional Communist orthodoxy, and the third to various forms of critical, revisionistic, or "open" Marxism. My argument however, is that the question is wrongly formulated and that attempts to answer it are not worth while. More precisely, it is impossible to answer the questions "How can the various problems of the modern world be solved in accordance with Marxism?", or "What would Marx say if he could see what his followers have done?" Both these are sterile questions and there is no rational way of seeking an answer to them. Marxism does not provide any specific method of solving questions that Marx did not put to himself or that did not exist in his time. If his life had been prolonged for ninety years he would have had to alter his views in ways that we have no means of conjecturing.

THOSE WHO HOLD that Communism is a "betrayal" or "distortion" of Marxism are seeking, as it were, to absolve Marx of responsibility for the actions of those who call themselves his spiritual posterity.

In the same way, heretics and schismatics of the 16th and 17th centuries accused the Roman Church of betraying its mission and sought to vindicate St Paul from the association with Roman corruption. In the same way, too, admirers of Nietzsche sought to clear his name from responsibility for the ideology and practice of Nazism. The ideological motivation of such attempts is clear enough, but their informative value is next to nothing. There is abundant evidence that all social movements are to be explained by a variety of circumstances and that the ideological sources to which they appeal, and to which they seek to remain faithful, are only one of the factors determining the form they assume and their patterns of thought and action. We may, therefore, be certain in advance that no political or religious movement is a perfect expression of that movement's "essence" as laid down in its sacred writings. On the other hand, these writings are not merely passive, but exercise an influence of their own on the course of the movement. What normally happens is that the social forces which make themselves the representatives of a given ideology are stronger than that ideology, but are to some extent dependent on its own tradition.

THE PROBLEM facing the historian of ideas, therefore, does not consist in comparing the "essence" of a particular idea with its practical "existence" in terms of social movements. The ques-

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KOLAKOWSKI: Yes, Zinoviev's *Yawning Heights* is a perceptive satire.

—I still wonder whether we have fully explained Stalin's need of "morituri te salutant." *I incline to feel that by exacting praise from the dying, Stalin wanted to create a special kind of monument to himself—one that would somehow inscribe it in capital print in the annals of history that* ***he*** *alone was Lenin's true reincarnation: revolutionary, theoretician and "builder of socialism."*

KOLAKOWSKI: One might say Stalin was obsessed by a demonology of sorts which went way beyond his political needs. He *had* to demonstrate, again and again, the power of ineradicable evil: now it resided in Trotskyism, now in Leftist Deviation,

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tion is rather how, and as a result of what circumstances, the original idea came to serve as a rallying-point for so many different and mutually hostile forces. Or, what were the ambiguities and conflicting tendencies in the idea itself which led to its developing as it did?

It is a well-known fact, to which the history of civilization records no exception, that all important ideas are subject to division and differentiation as their influence continues to spread. So there is no point in asking who is a "true" Marxist in the modern world, as such questions can only arise within an ideological perspective which assumes that the canonical writings are the authentic source of truth, and that whoever interprets them rightly must therefore be possessed of the truth. There is no reason, in fact, why we should not acknowledge that different movements and ideologies, however antagonistic to one another, are equally entitled to invoke the name of Marx—except for some extreme cases with which this work is not concerned.

In the same way, it is sterile to inquire "Who was a true Aristotelian—Averroës, Thomas Aquinas, or Pomponazzi?", or "Who was the truest Christian—Calvin, Erasmus, Bellarmine, or Loyola?" The latter question may have a meaning for Christian believers, but it has no relevance to the history of ideas. The historian may, however, be concerned to inquire what it was in primitive Christianity that made it possible for men so unlike as Calvin, Erasmus, Bellarmine, and Loyola to appeal to the same source.

In other words, the historian treats ideas seriously and does not regard them as completely subservient to events and possessing no life of their own (for in that case there would be no point in studying them), but he does not believe that they can endure from one generation to another without some change of meaning.

THE RELATIONSHIP between the Marxism of Marx and that of the Marxists is a legitimate field of inquiry, but it does not enable us to decide who are the "truest" Marxists.

If, as historians of ideas, we place ourselves outside ideology, this does not mean placing ourselves outside the culture within which we live. On the contrary, the history of ideas, and especially those which have been and continue to be the most influential, is to some extent an exercise in cultural self-criticism.

I propose to study Marxism from a point of view similar to that which Thomas Mann adopted in *Doktor Faustus vis-à-vis* Nazism and its relation to German culture. Thomas Mann was entitled to say that Nazism had nothing to do with German culture or was a gross denial and travesty of it. In fact, however, he did not say this. Instead, he inquired how such phenomena as the Hitler movement and Nazi ideology could have come about in Germany, and what were the elements in German culture that made this possible. Every German, he maintained, would recognise with horror, in the bestialities of Nazism, the distortion of features which could be discerned even in the noblest representatives (this is the important point) of the national culture. Mann was not content to pass over the question of the birth of Nazism in the usual manner, or to contend that it had no legitimate claim to any part of the German inheritance. Instead, he frankly criticised that culture of which he was himself a part and a creative element.

It is indeed not enough to say that Nazi ideology was a "caricature" of Nietzsche, since the essence of a caricature is that it helps us to recognise the original. The Nazis told their supermen to read The Will to Power, *and it is no good saying that this was a mere chance and that they might equally well have chosen the* Critique of Practical Reason. *It is not a question of establishing the "guilt" of Nietzsche, who as an individual was not responsible for the use made of his writings; nevertheless, the fact that they were so used is bound to cause alarm and cannot be dismissed as irrelevant to the understanding of what was in his mind.*

St Paul was not personally responsible for the inquisition and for the Roman Church at the end of the 15th century but the inquirer, whether Christian or not, cannot be content to observe that Christianity was depraved or distorted by the conduct of unworthy popes and bishops; he must rather seek to discover what it was in the Pauline epistles that gave rise, in the fullness of time, to unworthy and criminal actions.

Our attitude to the problem of Marx and Marxism should be the same, and in this sense the present study is not only an historical account but an attempt to analyse the strange fate of an idea which began in Promethean humanism and culminated in the monstrous tyranny of Stalin.

Leszek Kolakowski
in the introduction to his 3-volume
Main Currents of Marxism
(Oxford University Press)

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now in Rightist Deviation, in Titoism, in Zionism, whatever. In every case Stalin put up a symbol of absolute evil which the Party was then directed to fight and vanquish. Of course, this cultivation of enemies did have its practical uses—it kept the Party and the bureaucracy in a state of mobilisation and enforced unity. But the demonology was undeniably there.

—Why did Hitler or Mussolini not need this eschatological justification through the medium of show trials and false confessions?

KOLAKOWSKI: The lie plays an important but different role in Nazism—it has to do with straightforward propaganda: e.g., you tell the public that you *have* a decisive weapon when in fact you *haven't*, and so on. In Nazism there was a high degree of convergence between the Nazis' goals and their avowed goals. They stated more or less openly what they wanted: national glory, the extermination of the Jews, the partial extermination of some of the Slavic nations to make room for German ambitions, the creation of a Nazi world empire, and so on. These were genuine Nazi goals and the Nazis always said that they would pursue them as, in fact, they did.

Communism, on the other hand, and especially Stalinism, hides behind a false façade. Stalinism *had* to pay lip service to the old socialist tradition. It *had* to talk about internationalism, social justice, freedom, equality and the like because the framework of socialism and the vocabulary in which it was couched were its only title to legitimacy. Therefore the lie in Communist practice was, and is, a much more heinous thing than it was in Hitler's system, because the Stalinist practice of nationalism, slavery, and genocide is the complete negation of the avowed aims of the Soviet system. Hitler didn't, as far as his goals were concerned, lie very much to the world, but the world believed his truth to be too Satanic to be credible. Stalin lied to the world and, for a very long time, the lie succeeded.

—You have spent many years thinking and writing about Stalinism. I can consequently well understand your preoccupation with the devil. . . .

KOLAKOWSKI: The devil is part of our experience. Our generation has seen enough of it for the message to be taken extremely seriously. Evil, I contend, is not contingent, it is not the absence, or deformation, or subversion of virtue (or whatever else we may think of as its opposite), but a stubborn and unredeemable fact.

—It is an intriguing and much discussed question whether the Satanic element in Bolshevism inheres in the Russian tradition, or stems from Marxism-Leninism alone. Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Vladimir Maximov are the best known spokesmen of the view that the evils of the Soviet system are ideological rather than Russian, while the list of those who believe that some form of centralised despotism is endemic in Muscovite political culture includes Hugh Seton-Watson, Ronald Hingley, Robert C. Tucker, and Richard Pipes.[2] It is against Richard Pipes, and especially against his book, "Russia under the Old Régime" (1974), that Solzhenitsyn's principal attacks are directed. Richard Pipes's method of using certain Russian proverbs to underpin his argument "affects me in much the same way as I imagine Rostropovich would feel if he had to listen to a wolf playing the cello", Solzhenitsyn wrote in the Spring 1980 issue of "Foreign Affairs." Indeed, he claimed that American scholars demonstrate a "fundamental misunderstanding of Russia and the USSR" and that their presentation of pre-revolutionary Russia echoes arguments of Soviet propaganda. Where do you see the origins of the Satanic element in Bolshevism?

> ***"The Poles cannot share Solzhenitsyn's image of the Czarist régime as one of fatherly concern. They have lost too many of their men to the Czars' hangmen."***

KOLAKOWSKI: Stalinism resulted from the coincidence of a variety of factors. I would not deny that Russia's particular tradition bears the brunt of responsibility for it. Yet, for several decades before the 1917 Revolution Russia was the scene of a clash between Slavophile and Westernising forces. The Westernisers were powerful in the second half of 19th-century Russian culture, including political culture. Both the Bolshevik and Menshevik currents of Russian Social Democracy (as it then was) represented Westernising types of political thinking; and it was only after the Revolution that they were swamped and swallowed up by the old Tatar and Byzantine tradition in the shape of Leninism and then Stalinism.

Yet this explanation alone does not satisfy. That the cultural de-Westernisation of Russia under Leninism and Stalinism was something that happened within the ideological framework of Marxism cannot be dismissed as insignificant or accidental. We cannot say that the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist element was unimportant in the process. I would, therefore, define my position as being somewhere between Solzhenitsyn's and Pipes's—closer to Pipes than to Solzhenitsyn, but differing from Pipes in the sense that for me the impact of Marxism is important in its own right. I don't see Soviet Marxism merely as a latter-day incarnation of traditional traits in Russian culture.

[2] See the debate between Richard Pipes and Wladislaw G. Krasnow, "Anti-Soviet or Anti-Russian", ENCOUNTER, April 1980; also Richard Pipes, "Solzhenitsyn & The Russian Intellectual Tradition", ENCOUNTER, June 1979.

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Otherwise it becomes very hard to explain why pre-revolutionary Westernising socialists and liberals were so easily disarmed and defeated. What, we must ask, was it about Marxist ideology that enabled it to push Russia back, at one terrible blow, to the Tatar tradition in the name of "socialism"? And I am saying this fully aware of the fact that, by now, very few (if any) Soviet leaders are seriously guided by ideology. They nevertheless adhere to the intellectual framework and vocabulary of Marxism and Leninism because without it their title to rule would be non-existent.

But, while we are on Solzhenitsyn's text,[3] let me make some further points that need stating although they are only loosely connected with the question in hand. Solzhenitsyn is certainly right in stressing two things—first, that the oppressiveness of the Soviet régime far exceeds that of Czarist Russia in its last two decades; second, that Soviet rule is no less destructive of *Russian* national culture than it is of the culture and traditions of other nations and nationalities in the Soviet empire, even though Russian is used as the *lingua franca* of the state.

What, then, explains the Revolution and the ensuing tyranny? Speaking as a Pole, we Poles may rightly argue that the Communist system was imposed on us by foreign tanks, and that in the absence of the Soviet threat the system would instantaneously fall apart. But this is not an argument the *Soviets* can use: *they* have no Big Brother breathing down their necks; *they* are sovereign as a State; *their* system was launched and is being kept alive by domestic forces alone.

It astonishes me that Solzhenitsyn is so eager to prove the innocence of the Czarist régime. No Pole can swallow that; nor can any member of those many non-Russian peoples whose forefathers lived under Czarist rule. Solzhenitsyn alleges in the article you quote that although Alexander I entered Paris at the head of his forces, he did not annex an inch of European soil. This is only true on the supposition that the Poland of the time had already been part and parcel of Russia on the strength of divine law as interpreted by Catherine II!

Religious freedom? Does Solzhenitsyn forget the history of the Uniates, whose ruthless persecution began under Catherine and was then continuous in Czarist history (with especial ferocity under Nicholas I) until its consummation under the Soviet régime?

Our fathers saw the Russian Czars as hangmen, and rightly so. What reason would the Poles have had (or any of the other oppressed nations in the Czarist empire) to support a man like General Denikin, whose avowed purpose during the Civil War was the restoration of the old empire? We have learnt from bitter experience exactly what Lenin meant when he promised "self-determination" to the subject nations of the Czarist empire. Yet the lies of Lenin and those of his successors cannot be used to whitewash the Czars who did not even bother to make such promises! Victims for 130 years of fierce Russian oppression, the Poles cannot share Solzhenitsyn's image of the Czarist régime as one of fatherly concern. They have lost too many of their men to the Czars' hangmen.

—Let me pick up your point about ideology. You said that very few Soviet leaders are seriously guided by it—yet they adhere to the rhetoric because ideology is their only title to legitimacy. This is strikingly illustrated by various passages in Veljko Micunovic's "Moscow Diary" (1980), where Khrushchev's attempts to lure the Yugoslavs back into the "camp" are shown to have taken the form of appeals and reminders of Marxist-Leninist solidarity, a shared revolutionary heritage, and so on. The Yugoslavs (in Micunovic's presentation) do not ultimately fall for the bait, but neither do they entirely avoid making concessions to the rhetoric. The ideological framework was, and is, important.

KOLAKOWSKI: Moscow's only title to Yugoslav allegiance was "socialism." This was as true for Hungary in 1956 as it was for Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan in 1979. That, in reality, Moscow's concern was Soviet hegemony does not diminish the importance of the rhetoric of ideology. In fact, it makes it more significant as a handy and effective tool.

IV. The Disintegrating System

*TALKING OF the element of evil in Stalinism, I'm reminded of your warning in "Main Currents of Marxism" that the Stalinist system fears nothing more than ideological criticism from within the "socialist" family. And I'd like to link this idea with an argument you use, half in jest, half in earnest, in one of your "edifying tales from Holy Scripture to serve as teaching and warning." The tale I have in mind is "Father Bernard's Great Sermon" in which you are concerned with the power of evil and seem to offer the sardonic conclusion that one can only cast out Satan with Satan. In an argument that is itself a devilish satire on some verses in the Gospel (*Matthew 12, 23-28*) you make a half-crazed, misanthropic Father Bernard say:*

> *"So there is one, only one effective method against Satan and none other—cast Satan out with Satan, force him to the floor using his own weapons, destroy evil with evil, infect the poisonous weed with its own poison. . . ."*

Now the ***ultimate*** *message of your story is clear: "if you use one devil to cast out another, you will still be left*

[3] Now published as a small book, *The Mortal Danger: How Misconceptions about Russia Imperil the West* (translated by Michael Nicholson and Alexis Klimoff; Bodley Head, London; Harper & Row, New York).

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with one." Nevertheless, you have made Father Bernard's case sound so convincing that I cannot help feeling that you were (so to speak) jesting in earnest; for I at least have been left with the impression that behind Father Bernard's diabolical mockery and self-mockery there is a truth you want your reader to assimilate:

> *"Only the fallen one . . . can struggle against the fallen, because to wage war one has to dwell in the same pit, and only a fallen angel can defeat another. . . ."*

Now, I wonder whether you were aiming your satire at the sort of thing encapsulated in Lenin's observation (taken over from Peter the Great) that one can only defeat barbarism with barbarism? Or were you, perhaps, trying to say something much closer to the bone, namely that only one who has been reared in the bosom of evil can know that true character of evil and defeat it? Which would point to the role of Communist heretics such as yourself—"fallen angels" who ***have*** *shared a pit with the devil and would know how to "infect the poisonous weed with its own poison."*

KOLAKOWSKI: Let me stress that the words you quote from my tale are spoken by an emissary of Hell—and here I am certain that I was thinking of no political analogies. Yet your questions merit discussion in their own right.

To take Lenin's quip first. It has been a long-held Communist illusion that you can somehow build a radiant future using fear, oppression, and terror as your means. It took the world's Communists several decades to learn—and many have not made the discovery to this day—that if you build equality by increasing *in*equality, you'll be left with *in*equality; that if you want to attain freedom by applying mass terror, the result will be mass terror; that if you want to work for a just society through fear and repression, you will get fear and repression rather than universal fraternity. You might, of course, say that it didn't take enormous intellectual effort to understand this—yet the illusion was deeply ingrained in the minds of Communists. Suppression of the "class enemy", the abolition of civil liberties and indeed terror were accepted as the necessary evil which precedes the new society. Today we can see clearly enough that means define ends, but Communist thinking has always held the reverse to be true. Trotsky stated this clearly and emphatically.

"Communism believed that you can ***compel*** *people to love one another—and that is a prescription for* GULAG. *Once you even* ***think*** *that you can do that, you have your* GULAG in potentia."

Nineteenth-century society reacted to the industrial revolution and urbanisation with two sweeping ideological answers: Nationalism and Socialism, each trying to restore in its different ways what industrialisation had destroyed. Both were searching for the fully just fraternity, one basing itself on linguistic community and a shared historical experience, while the other sought to create a toiler's egalitarian community cutting across national barriers. I will waste no words on the degeneration of these visions, in the 20th century, into fanatical and destructive state ideologies culminating in the merger of the two in Hitler's "National Socialism." What is important for my present purpose is that both aspired to social perfection which they sought to attain by means of human engineering. This is particularly true of Communism—a bastard offspring of the socialist idea. Its technological approach to human life made it especially receptive to the idea that a flawless fraternity of men could be institutionalised by ukase. It believed (to put it quite simply) that you can *compel* people to love one another—and that, of course, is a prescription for GULAG. Once you even *think* that you can do that, you have your GULAG *in potentia*.

We might find it appalling that free societies of the Western type are based on greed as the main human motivation, but this is still better than compulsory love, for that can *only* end in a society of prisoners and prison warders.

—What about the second part of my suggestion, which I would now break down into two separate statements: ***(a)*** *that the Communist system can only be defeated by means just as violent as the system itself, and* ***(b)*** *that only a fallen Communist can fully expose the crimes and inadequacies of the Communist system?*

KOLAKOWSKI: These are two separate questions. One can say Yes to the first without saying Yes to the second, and vice versa.

Let me first take your proposition that the violence of Communism can only be defeated by like violence. I would very much hope that this is not so. A violent collapse of the Soviet system would have incalculable consequences—some possibly as bad as the survival of the system itself. I cannot foresee the future, but my hope is that the system will disintegrate peacefully, through the strains and stresses which plague it, rather than through violent upheavals. In my own country, Poland, the opposition has never propagated, much less used, violent methods. Quite apart from the fact that violence would be a hopeless and absurd undertaking, it might, as I say, start a chain of unguided and unguidable reactions. We cannot possibly wish these upon ourselves.

On the second point—starting with the 1930s, a number of former Communists have played leading roles in the ideological criticism of the Soviet system. They spoke with inside knowledge, and it may well be that their contribution has been indispensable. The facts are too well known to need

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going over; but I would warn against any suggestion that this critique implies violence or that violence of any kind has, in fact, been used as a result of it. If Communism is—as I believe it is—already in a state of slow disintegration, responsibility lies with the terror and violence which the system itself has exercised throughout, and with its total lack of self-correcting mechanisms.

—Since 1917 we have never been short of diagnoses that the system was moribund. Yet it exists and expands and shows, on the face of it, few signs of disintegration. Have we all been fooled by Soviet propaganda? What is your evidence for saying that the disintegration is in progress?

KOLAKOWSKI: The Soviet empire is suffering from a whole series of internal contradictions which defy resolution. It is unable to halt the growing tension between its various nations and nationalities. This is the most powerful disintegrating factor. I am not happy about it because nationalism has always had a tendency to explode with extreme destructiveness, and it easily generates obscurantist forces. Then there is the incurable malaise that the system is incapable of economic efficiency and modernisation. Today Russia is—as she has been uninterruptedly since 1917—a land of chronic food shortages, widespread cheating and corruption.

"The Western image of Soviet strength is largely due to the fears and incomprehension of the West."

Third, there is the tension between the new and more highly educated layers of society demanding a freer and more plentiful life, and the system which can offer no such life. The pull of these growing expectations is the more difficult to resist as the system cannot, as it did under Stalin, completely isolate itself from the West. Contact with the West is yet another source of tensions, for while the system is badly in need of capitalist aid, know-how and technology, it fears and tries to limit the resulting contamination.

These, then, are some of the pressures plaguing the Soviet Union. The Soviet leaders cannot go back to a pure form of Stalinism for fear of jeopardising their own power and bringing the country economically even lower than it is. My prediction, therefore, is that they will go on trying to work out some compromise between terror and the needs of modernisation. But I don't think they will hit on a satisfactory formula, and the disintegration will continue.

—If they are so weak—why are they so strong? For weakness is the last thing we in the West associate with the USSR these days.

KOLAKOWSKI: Soviet strength is in the eye of the beholder. I will leave aside military matters of which I know little, but if we look at the internal cohesion and viability of the Soviet system—and that, after all, is the bed-rock on which military strength, too, ultimately relies—it is at once clear that the Western perception of Soviet strength is in very large measure due to the fact that the Kremlin is in a position to conceal its recurrent disasters from Western eyes and even from those of its own population. The Soviet system has one decisive advantage which despotisms have always enjoyed over democracies: nothing has to be explained, because there is no free discussion—hence the Soviet system may very well succeed in showing a robust complexion to the outside world while inside it is being eaten away by cancer. The Western image of Soviet strength is largely due to the fears and incomprehension of the West.

—You observed in "Marxism and Beyond" that a Party which wields despotic power cannot turn its back on ideology—an erosion of ideology would undermine its power because ideology is its sole source of legitimacy. You made a similar point earlier in this discussion when you emphasised the importance of an even unconvincingly filled ideological framework. The question I want to put to you is this: In the Soviet Union popular belief in the ideology is a thing of the past and has been so for quite some time. No one believes in Marxism-Leninism any longer. Yet the rhetoric of ideology continues to offer a rationale for the exercise of state power. Do you expect "the end of ideology" to bring about the demise of state power, too?

One notes that the erosion of ideology has so far by no means weakened the power of the Soviet state to assert itself either vis-à-vis *heretical co-religionists such as the Chinese, or infidels in the rest of the world such as the Afghans. Might it, indeed, not be the case that it is only through the exercise of state power in adversary relationships with Imperialists, Nationalists, and Heretics that a semblance of ideology can be maintained?*

KOLAKOWSKI: Lip-service to ideology can survive—nobody knows for how long—but as long as it does, the functions you and I have ascribed to it at the state level will continue to be performed. At the same time, even the rhetoric of Soviet ideology has considerably changed since Stalin's time. It is now a vague, incoherent pot-pourri of phrases, mixing old Communist tenets with ill-concealed nationalist slogans. The real ideological channel of communication with the population is, by now, not Communism but Nationalism: national glory, the growth of the Empire, racism, xenophobia, and only very thinly-disguised anti-Semitism. This, in contrast to Soviet ideology, does have a good deal of influence. If we now move to the satellite states (Poland, for example), Communism has almost vanished from the official vocabulary. From time to time it is mentioned at Party congresses and in ceremonial speeches as an act of religious tribute to

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the founding fathers, but everyday propaganda is conducted in terms of economic development, modernisation, a higher living standard, peace, and so on. On these there is an assured consensus, for naturally everyone is against war, against economic inefficiency, and against low standards of living.

—Of course, popular reactions in Poland or Hungary are not comparable with those in Russia. No East European Communist government under Soviet tutelage could hope to create for itself a sense of legitimacy by an appeal to nationalism. But, as you have said, in the Soviet Union the official ideology, patriotism and nationalism can mutually support one another under certain circumstances, and have done so in the past. I can, for example, well imagine that the expansion of Soviet power to Afghanistan has gone down well with "patriotic" sections of the Party and population, just as the occupation of Czechoslovakia, too, was well supported by nationalistic sentiment.

KOLAKOWSKI: I wish I knew how the Russian population reacts to Afghanistan. It may well be that Soviet propaganda has managed to stoke up a mentality which makes the ordinary Russian feel that Afghanistan is a contribution to the glory of the greater Russian empire. On the other hand, he knows well enough that the Afghan adventure is costly in human lives and that he and his like are having to pay the price.

In a country where the suppression of public opinion is total we have no way of telling what is in the Russian mind. I would indeed go further: that opinion cannot be freely expressed is a very real cause of the non-existence or self-suppression of opinion. Where views can be freely expressed this fact is very important for the formation of *what* is expressed. People in constant fear of saying something that might land them in trouble simply do not, after a time, even *think* the sort of things that might boomerang on them. They suppress dangerous thoughts before these have occasion to arise, for nobody likes to think that he did have a dissenting opinion but was too much of a coward to articulate it.

—There is a book to be written about "Self-Censorship and the Communist Intellectual". . . .

KOLAKOWSKI: Alexander Zinoviev put his finger on the problem, and his conclusions are pessimistic. He says that in the Soviet Union nobody, of course, believes the official slogans about Communism. Nevertheless six decades of "socialism" *have* succeeded in producing a new man—an unthinking object perfectly willing to live with the official slogans, not because he believes them to be true in the normal sense of the word, but because he has lost any sense of distinction between the truth and the sort of verbal behaviour expected from him by the authorities.

After the 1953 East German rising, I remember talking to an SED Party *apparatchik*. "I cannot understand these workers", he said. "Only a few days ago they applauded the Party leaders' speeches and voted for the Party, but then overnight we had these violent demonstrations against socialism and the Soviet Union. . . ." This illustrates my point: our consciousness incorporates layers of dormant "underground" materials. As long as there is no call or opportunity for them to be articulated, they remain dormant and to some extent even unknown. But if something suddenly releases the springs of articulation, they rush to the surface and assert themselves with great force. This is what happened in East Berlin and also in Hungary in 1956. In Budapest, a seemingly well-disciplined and enthusiastic Party fell apart within a matter of days until nothing was left of it—nothing at all.

—China before and at the time of the "Hundred Flowers" movement provides another example, and right now we can see a somewhat similar response in the way the Chinese are trying to react to the crimes and rigours of the Cultural Revolution. In both cases an extraordinary show of conformity was suddenly shattered by dissent and protest, and were it not for the repressive policies, at least in the field of civic freedoms, of the current liberalising régime, the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution would be even more spectacular than it is.

KOLAKOWSKI: Yes—the penalty of self-repression is explosion at the most unexpected times and places. This is as true for societies as it is for individuals.

V. The Dead Ideology

AREN'T WE making somewhat light of the seriousness with which Communists take their commitment, even if they are not unconditional believers of every word in the sacred books? You have said that the lack of freedom to express certain ideas acts as automatic self-censorship on the ideas themselves. I believe the reverse to be equally true: those forced to express and propagate certain ideas inevitably come to believe them, or a good deal of them, to be true. The reason is the same you have mentioned: no one likes to think of himself as a coward or liar. I am leading up to an observation of yours in "Marxism and Beyond":

> *"The intellectual and moral values of Communism are not luxurious ornaments of its activity but the conditions of its existence."*

Don't you think that Communist leaders and members of the apparat, *whether in the East or the West, are impelled by the functions they perform and positions they occupy genuinely to embrace some of these "intellectual and moral values"?*

KOLAKOWSKI: I wrote the words you have quoted a quarter of a century ago, from a revisionist point

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of view, when I still thought that Communism could be somehow rejuvenated through intellectual and moral reform. But I have long given up any such idea.

I regard the whole ideology as dead, utterly dead. The Soviet Union is led by a clique of power-holders and political manipulators who spawn power-holders and manipulators of their own in the client countries in Eastern Europe. They are governed by notions of military power, national aggrandisement, prestige, and a fractious sense of compensating for their traditional backwardness *vis-à-vis* the West. The true definition of the Soviet leadership is not that of a "Communist" leadership but of a parvenu élite.

Do the Soviet leaders to some extent identify, as you suggest, with the spirit of the script they read to the public? I very much doubt it. Ideology is not an independent variable shaping their decisions, even if these decisions are justified and presented in ideological terms. I would describe their position as that of an Oligarchy finding themselves in possession of an inherited Empire which they feel they must maintain and expand, and that means upholding the ideological rationale on which the Empire is built. Sincerity of faith does not come into the

A Force for "Peace & Progress"?

Moscow

IT IS quite legitimate for the Russians to encourage the spread of communism throughout the world, and this in no way should affect détente. But it is impermissible for the West to try to stop the spread of communism as that would be to act against history; and countries that have become communist cannot be allowed to change their systems because that would constitute counter-revolution. That is the gist of a lengthy and important restatement of the Soviet position on the ideological struggle and peaceful coexistence published in the current issue of the Russian weekly journal *New Times*.

The article appears to be a reply to Western assertions that the Russians are not acting in good faith over détente because they conceive it simply as a one-way movement of the balance of forces in their favour and are ready to encourage this movement with military help.

THROUGHOUT *the article the West is equated with the forces of imperialism, war, class, oppression and exploitation, whereas communism is described as a force for peace and progress which self-evidently is in the interests of the masses. By this logic, the Russians argue that military parity cannot be conditional on ideological parity, since at a time of peace the masses themselves will always choose "socialism, peace and progress."*

> **"The preponderance of socialist forces, and those rejecting war and imperialism and supporting democracy and socialism, not only remains but is growing. There is not and probably never can be parity here. It is naïve to try to establish some equality or status quo here, and somehow to regulate the aspiration and sentiments of the masses."**

The article said the working class movement in capitalist countries was growing stronger and the non-aligned movement had consolidated itself on an "anti-imperialist" basis. These trends could not be stopped by armed force, and any attempts to do so would lead only to a sharp aggravation of the world situation. But it would be ridiculous to blame this aggravation on "those who were against war and for social progress"—in other words, on the communists.

The blame lay on the imperialist anti-détente policy "whose social essence consists precisely of changing, by means of interference in the internal affairs of peoples, with the help of the arms race and international confrontation, the balance of social and class forces, which is changing to the detriment of imperialism."

THE ARTICLE emphasized that the Soviet Union and the Communist Party had always been firmly opposed to the social status quo. This principle reflected "objective requirements of world social development." They also rejected attempts to torpedo détente, which the article said had been "particularly flagrant" this year.

But just as the party opposed the export of revolution, so it equally resolutely opposed the export of counter-revolution, and supported the struggle of peoples for their rights.

***New Times* thus justifies the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and hostility to developments in Poland. The idea is that since opposition to the communist régimes in both countries has been labelled by the Russians as "counter-revolutionary", opposed to the real interests of the masses, the Russians' actual or potential intervention could in no way be compared to the West's use of force to stop the spread of communism.**

THE FORMER *was sanctified by the "objective forces of history"; the latter was not. Only from this standpoint, the journal said, could one "correctly" understand international events which caused arguments even among the left such as the revolutions in Afghanistan, Iran and Nicaragua and the ousting of the Pol Pot régime in Kampuchea.*

Michael Binyon
in THE TIMES (*London*)

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picture. Certainly nothing better has yet been devised to sustain and export despotism than Communist phraseology. Pan-Slavism and Orthodoxy under the Czarist régime were amateurish tools by comparison.

—If you want to corner authentic Communists, you have to look for them in their one remaining habitat: Western Europe and the USA. . . .

KOLAKOWSKI: I'm not even sure whether these "authentic" Communists are Communists of the first water. With the collapse of ideology in the East, the Western Communists have a difficult row to hoe. When you think of the strength of their allegiance under Stalin—both to the creed and to the Soviet "bastion"—their current evasive attitude is spectacular. More often than not they want neither to defend nor to denounce the Soviet exemplar—just to avoid the issue as much as they can. Think

"A Communist type of Utopia can be fully totalitarian without owing allegiance to the Soviet model."

of Maurice Thorez enunciating from the rooftops that the Soviet Union was the great matrix of liberty and the hope of mankind, and put this side by side with the apologetic and embarrassed mumblings of Western Communists today. The Soviet Union *has* no genuine partisans among Communists, only people who offer excuses and mitigating circumstances to explain some particularly repugnant aspect of Soviet reality.

All this goes *a fortiori* for intellectuals who are (as we know) traditionally accident-prone. Despotisms of all shades have never gone begging for intellectual rationalisers, but if you compare the noisy militancy with which the Western intellectual estate closed ranks behind Stalin's monstrosities with their present disorientation—the contrast is truly remarkable. The Maoist fad was already a much diminished replay of the great surge of Stalinism, but it died with Mao just as the cult of Stalinism among Western intellectuals had died with Stalin. I am convinced that if the Soviet Union fell apart, 90% of Western Marxism, too, would go down with it, including those varieties which emphasise that they do not identify themselves with the Soviet system and indeed condemn it.

—Doesn't this rather weaken your argument that Communist ideology of the official Soviet type has few takers? If the continued existence of Marxism in the West is, as you say, a function of the continued existence of the Soviet Union, then the Soviet leaders are right in saying that the very existence of the Soviet system is a kind of reinsurance policy for the world's "progressive" forces. And this undoubtedly implies a case for arguing that the excision of the Soviet system is, in the last analysis, a precondition for the peace of Western society.

KOLAKOWSKI: It seems true that the existence of the Soviet system provides broad intellectual cover for European and American Leftism, even though this is no longer acknowledged.

—The question is: should we attach greater significance to this cover than the Russians attach to the fact that the very existence of a free and prosperous West is subversive of Communist institutions?

KOLAKOWSKI: I would say both are real.

—No matter how thoroughly the European Left may have internalised the lessons of Stalinism with its conscious self, its unconscious reactions almost unfailingly propel it in the direction of patience, compromise, understanding, at worst benevolent doubt, vis-à-vis *Soviet policies. For example, a vote on improving the military posture of NATO will attract the far Left of the British Labour Party, the Left of the German SPD, and Left Socialists in Holland into the same anti-American lobby using the same arguments. The Pavlovian reflexes of the 1930s appear to be powerfully alive. The Soviet Union may no longer represent a state of blessedness for the Left, but to work* ***against*** *the Soviet Union is an inadmissable challenge to Providence. I have, for example, no difficulty with the notion of a Soviet-Vichy France, under Communist-Socialist auspices, if Western Europe came under warlike threat from the Soviet Union—that is, French self-Finlandisation.*

KOLAKOWSKI: I share your concern about France; indeed I would drop the qualification "under Communist-Socialist auspices". . . .

But to your main point: I observed earlier on that there has to be a certain amount of Utopianism in every society. It so happens that the repertoire of radical social change contains nothing as effective as Communism as a force capable of mobilising wishful thinking, frustrated expectations and grievances of every kind. Now, a Communist type of Utopia can be fully totalitarian without owing allegiance to the Soviet model. Indeed some Western Communists now dismiss the Soviet experience with rather open contempt while at the same time holding fast to the idea that a great orgy of nationalisation will somehow usher in social harmony as well as plenty. The absurdity of the notion that the universal spread of bureaucracy, state control. and centralisation will make for greater freedom, more spontaneity and higher individual satisfaction in the economy is manifest. It is true, on the other hand, that a pure sort of economic liberalism has been a dead option for a long time; and the issue now is not *whether* the state should control various branches of the economy, but to what *extent* it should do so.

It *is* preposterous that the belief in one magic

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remedy for the human predicament should be entertained by men and women who are adult by any other standard; but there is in the human makeup an elemental urge to harmonise in one perfect whole everything in our experience that seems incompatible and inexplicable. Communism is a technique for keeping this dream alive and institutionalising it, and it has, we must concede, done so with some success if we consider the irrationality of the whole enterprise.

These dreams are, as I say, independent from the Soviet model; nevertheless the Soviet example—or what is taken to be the Soviet example—provides intellectual security of the kind implicit in the existence of a distant but powerful uncle, even though the appalling history of Soviet Communism is, reluctantly or less reluctantly, now admitted.

—There is, then, an element of truth in Ronald Reagan's much-derided statement that "the Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on"?

KOLAKOWSKI: Certainly not, if this means that, were it not for Soviet incitement, "there wouldn't be *any* hot spots in the world." Clearly there would.

—You have said that the Communist dreams are essentially independent from the Soviet model, that is to say, they possess a certain life force of their own. Yet, in 1975, in your fierce polemical exchange with E. P. Thompson,[4] you observed that the Communist idea was dead: "That skull will never smile again." How do you reconcile these two statements?

KOLAKOWSKI: I may have failed to make a distinction which is relevant to our discussion. Communism in the West has habitually identified itself with Sovietism (other varieties being relegated to very minor importance). This Communism—if we leave aside Soviet military strength and military expansion—is now an ideological, political, and cultural corpse. In the Third World it either takes a very different (which does not necessarily mean more attractive) form, or it is just another word for domination by Soviet imperialism.

Yet I do not believe that Utopian thinking can ever be completely eradicated from human affairs, and I do not believe it would be desirable if it could, in spite of all the disasters which have followed from Utopianism. However, to subsume Utopian visions under the general label of "Communism" would be misleading because, historically, Communism and Leninism have become the same thing for all practical purposes. And we know how far Leninism is from Utopia.

—The magnetism of power for Left-wing intellectuals strikes me as a good illustration of "la trahison des clercs", *in Julien Benda's sense of the phrase, but with the poles reversed. Its psychology has been explained often enough, yet I never cease to marvel at the keenness with which writers of history and students of politics are prepared to turn their backs on the detachment of their profession for the doubtful glory of occupying a ministerial chair and perhaps making (as distinct from writing) a tiny bit of history. True, the betrayal exacts its own kind of reckoning: I have yet to come across a book of any merit—not counting memoirs—that has come from the pen of an intellectual-turned-politician* ***after*** *his spell in office.*

Sidney and Beatrice Webb are said to have remarked after their trip to the Soviet Union that they were profoundly impressed by the toughness of the Soviet comrades. While the Webbs were burning the midnight oil arguing the fine points of socialism with Bloomsbury friends and opponents, the leaders in the Kremlin were acting like men: ***they*** *had people shot or sent to Siberia!* ***That*** *was making policy!*

Civilians in uniform apparently make the harshest generals. Could the same be true of intellectuals?

KOLAKOWSKI: There is one side to the nature of intellectuals which finds fascination in power and even cruelty. Nazism attracted men of this type, but Stalinism did infinitely better because *it* could draw on the benefits of socialist phraseology. The intellectual's main fear is—and the Webbs are a good example—that he is not being heard, that he is talking to himself or a minute circle of like-minded readers. Hitching his waggon to a powerful cause is one infallible way of making sure that his voice *will* be heard. On balance, the intellectuals *have* learned from Stalinism. The penalties of their misplaced loyalty to Stalin have made them more cautious; but this is no guarantee that they will be more prudent when the next variety of salvationary ideology turns up. Utopia and despotism are powerful magnets.

You have mentioned that there is, in the political attitudes of the European Left, an undercurrent of feelings which betrays a residual pro-Soviet bias. This is true, and I am intrigued by the psychology which motivates it. There are, as I see it, two things involved. First, no one likes to disown his past as an unmitigated disaster. Second—and this flows from the first—the attractions of saying "Yes, the Soviet system has made many mistakes, *but* on balance it nevertheless represents an advance in human affairs" are great.

This is then linked to the self-righteous assertion that a man of the Left should avoid doing anything that might further the interests of "Rightist" forces in the world, and you have a ready-made recipe for pro-Soviet, or if you like, anti-Western and illiberal attitudes. When the chips are down, these people invariably come out on the side of the Kremlin.

—I have a certain sympathy with young people in search of a doctrine. Their vocational and professional training is one long demonstration that there ***is*** *a body of knowledge which turns a man into a good civil engineer*

[4] See Leszek Kolakowski's reply to E. P. Thompson, "My Correct Views on Everything", *The Socialist Register* (1974).

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or good doctor. So what could be more natural for them than to ask: and what is the body of knowledge that teaches us to create a just society? With the collapse of Nazism, Bolshevism, and Maoism, some of the most beguiling answers of our time have been exploded. So what is there now for young idealists to hang on to? I doubt whether the civilised scepticism of university professors can act as a substitute.

KOLAKOWSKI: I wish I knew the answer. The West has become extremely suspicious of patent medicines. There is no single answer to our predicaments. One cause around which we might be able to build something like an ideology is liberty. This is denied in very large parts of the world, but people who are not denied it tend to take it for granted, and are reluctant to stand up for it unless they are directly threatened. It is difficult to convince them that unremitting vigilance is the price of liberty, and even if they do allow themselves to be alerted, they will find reasons for avoiding the issue and for procrastination. Afghanistan is a good example. "Kabul—well, it's a long way from Paris. . . ." But Cleveland, Ohio, is even further away. Does it follow that the Americans should think Cleveland to be as distant from Paris as the French believe Paris to be from Cleveland?

I can't, as I say, offer a remedy for the West's lack of a political strategy. Yet I don't believe the Soviet Union will take over Western Europe in the foreseeable future.

—What makes you think that? The cards appear to be stacked against Europe both militarily and psychologically.

KOLAKOWSKI: You are quite right to ask me for evidence. I cannot offer you very much. The Russians would not want to move in on Europe at the risk of global war, and that risk still exists. The moment that risk is weakened they might hope to get away with it. Furthermore, I don't believe that Communism is under all circumstances the beneficiary of war—

—. . . even though you have written that since 1905 every war has produced benefits for the spread of Communism . . . ?

KOLAKOWSKI: . . . Yes, in spite of that analysis. There is no *law* stating that Communism is the automatic beneficiary—that the expansion, hitherto, of Communism in the world is destined to end in the domination of the world. Let us imagine for a moment that we are in the 9th century AD and have enough of a global view to observe the spread of Islam. Well, its rapid expansion would have been the despair of a Christian futurologist working with the tools of extrapolation from known tendencies; for he could have forecast nothing but the impending conquest of the whole of Europe. On ideological grounds, too, our imaginary futurologist would have had reason to fear for Christendom, because the Islamic world-view was extremely powerful, dynamic, and fatalistic, not in the demobilising but in the mobilising sense of the word. Yet the drive exhausted itself.

—The Turks did not have a powerful Moslem pressure group (or "fifth column") in Rome or Paris, whereas the Soviets arguably have.

KOLAKOWSKI: True but neither did Christendom have *its* religionists in Constantinople as a powerful force—as we have our "fifth column" (if you like) in the shape of the whole populations of Eastern Europe.

We are *not* facing an irresistible force, no matter how effectively Soviet disinformation may have manipulated us into believing that the cards of history are stacked against us. Democracy has the great advantage that it can mobilise the resources of self-correction, while the despotic variety of socialism corrects itself only as a result of major catastrophes. The strength of despotism, on the other hand, lies in the circumstance that it can conceal its failures, and it really *is* stronger by the sheer fact of *appearing* to be stronger. But, to repeat, in the last analysis the main source of Soviet strength is Western incomprehension of those great and growing internal tensions which threaten the fabric of the Soviet system. If the Soviet leaders suspected for one moment that the Western world knew what *they* know about their system, their worries about the staying power of the Soviet Empire would increase immeasurably.

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MEMOIR

Goronwy Rees

A. J. Ayer

MY FRIENDSHIP with Goronwy Rees went back nearly fifty years. I place our first meeting early in my second year at Oxford; Goronwy was in his third year. I cannot now remember whether he still had rooms in New College or was living in lodgings. I was introduced to him by Martin Cooper who had recently "discovered" me. One link between them was that they were both well-established members of Maurice Bowra's circle, of which I then stood barely at the fringe. Many years later, in his book *A Chapter of Accidents*, Goronwy wrote of the difficulty which he had experienced in adapting himself to the social climate of Oxford as it then was; but I saw no signs of this. I was struck, rather, by the self-confidence to which he seemed to me obviously entitled by his good looks, his charm and his quick mind. I learned from Martin that I had made a less favourable impression upon Goronwy, though he gave me credit for intelligence. Even on this score I soon let him down by publishing, in some undergraduate magazine, an ill-written and insincere article in praise of bull-fighting. I remember his advising me rather sternly, on our next meeting, to stick to philosophy where I knew what I was about, and not to stray into literature. He himself was already at work on his first novel, which was only moderately successful, but he always knew how to write.

Goronwy was elected to All Souls in the autumn of 1931 and we continued friends, on a rather casual basis, for the remainder of my time as an undergraduate. I hoped to join him at All Souls in 1932 but was unsuccessful. Instead I went to Vienna on a few months leave from Christ Church, my old college which had appointed me a lecturer. In the meantime Goronwy had gone to Berlin to gather material for a book on Lassalle, which he eventually decided not to write. In Vienna my wife and I went frequently to the cinema and I still vividly remember the surprise and pleasure with which we identified Goronwy, in some German feature film, impersonating a kilted Highland officer. I believe that he played some other small parts but this was the only one that we had the luck to see him in.

For a few years we were out of touch until 1935 when I was able to reconcile being a Research Student of Christ Church with making my home in London, and Goronwy was also established in London as an assistant editor of *The Spectator*. He persuaded the literary editor Derek Verschoyle to send me a number of books to review, for which I was very grateful. He visited us now and then at our maisonette in Foubert's Place and I occasionally saw him with Elizabeth Bowen or Rosamund Lehmann, but we met most frequently to play tennis in Battersea Park with Martin Cooper and the novelist Ralph Ricketts. At that time Goronwy was deeply involved in the international literary movement which was urging resistance to Fascism. I too was involved but rather as a Soho politician than as a literary man.

Goronwy and I both passed through Sandhurst as officer cadets, but he was a stage ahead of me. By the time I went there as an apprentice to the

IT IS now a year since our dear and valued editor GORONWY REES died in London (on 12 December 1979) at the age of 70. Our readers will surely not take it as sentimentality if we report that his desk here in our editorial office remains unoccupied, his regular monthly column still irreplaceable. We continue to mourn his passing, to suffer the loss of his wit and wisdom; and the following appreciations on the first anniversary of his death recapture the personality and intellectual spirit of this extraordinary man whom we were privileged to know, to work with, and to publish.

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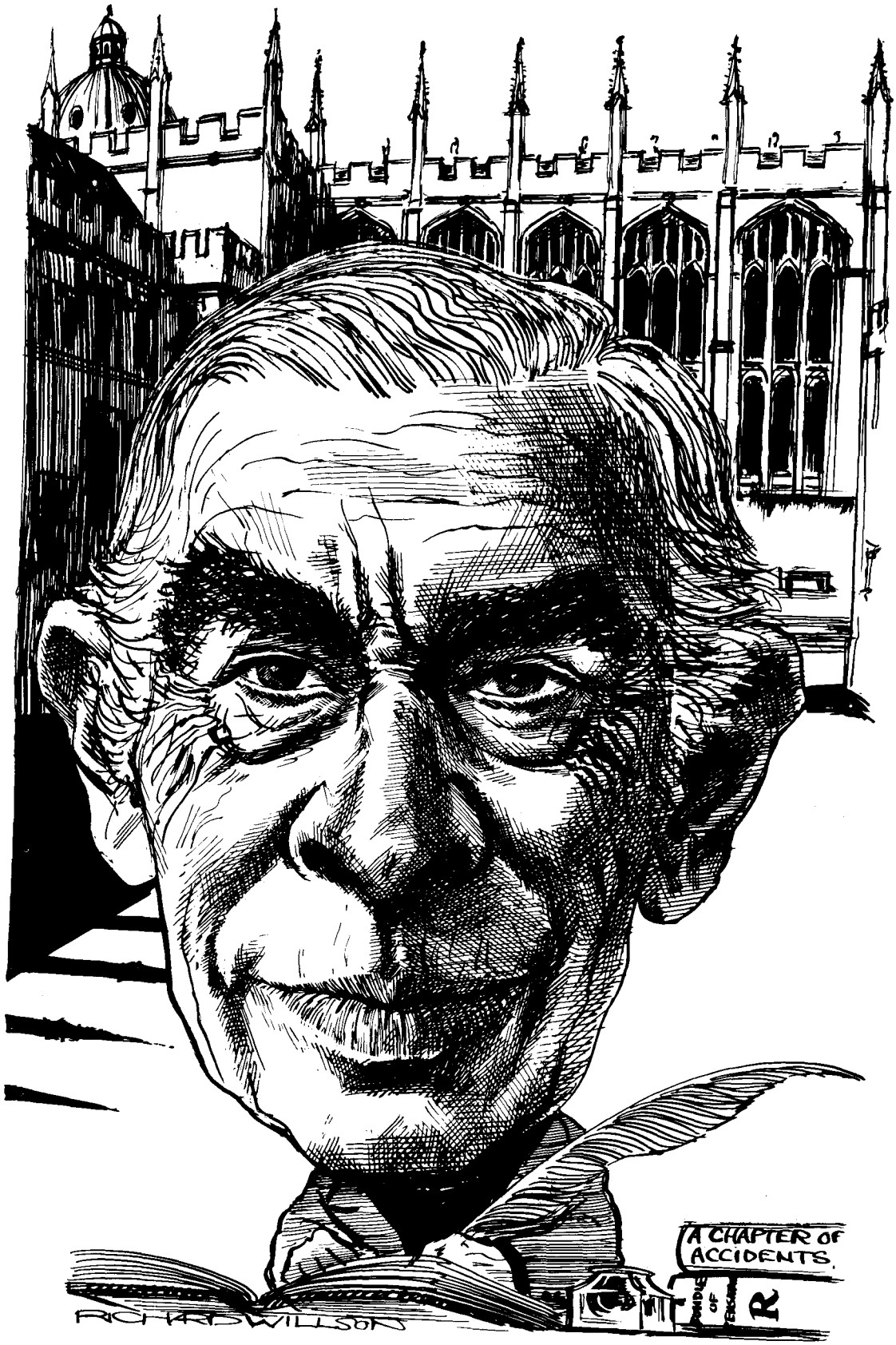

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Welsh Guards he was already commissioned into the Royal Welch Fusiliers. Our first meeting during the War was at Oxford where we had severally chosen to spend a period of leave. He had just married Margie and was anxious to introduce her to his intellectual friends. We had a lunch at the "George" at which we were joined by Isaiah Berlin; and Goronwy told me long afterwards that when he asked Margie what she thought of us, she said that we seemed to her "beings from some other world." If she did have this feeling, she soon overcame it or it did not matter to her, for she gave no impression of being at a loss. I immediately liked and admired her, and I cannot remember ever hearing an ill word spoken of her by any of Goronwy's friends. On the contrary, we all appreciated the strength and stability that she brought into his life, apart from her complementing his looks and charm. My friendship with them as a couple was cemented a few months later when I was sent to Cambridge for a course on the interrogation of German prisoners and found that Goronwy was one of my instructors. During the two or three weeks that the course lasted I spent nearly all my spare time with them.

AFTER THAT our paths diverged and it was not until the middle 1950s when Goronwy had become Principal of the University College at Aberystwyth that our friendship again became active. I visited them quite frequently and became godfather to Matthew, the youngest of their five attractive children. The moral climate of Aberystwyth did not suit them, and I remember sometimes having to buy their drink for them, as it was not thought suitable that the Principal of the College or his wife should be seen in a place where liquor was sold. Nevertheless Goronwy did well by the College and Margie loyally played her part as a hostess. Their virtually forcing him to resign—because of the series of articles about Guy Burgess which he published anonymously in the *Sunday People*—was a shabby return.

Goronwy had shown me the manuscript from which the articles were drawn at a time when he had no intention of publishing it. Like all his autobiographical work, it was beautifully written and contained nothing to which any reasonable person could take exception on the score of taste. Unfortunately, when Burgess's reappearance in Moscow caused Goronwy to change his mind about publication, he allowed his agent to offer the work to the highest bidder, with the result that the articles were given a coating of sensationalism which their original lacked. This not only put a weapon into the hands of his enemies at Aberystwyth but also offended some of his Oxford friends. I saw how deeply he felt their criticism when I ran into him by chance at a London restaurant. When I went up to greet him, he said "What, are you still speaking to me?" "Of course", I said, "why shouldn't I?" "Well", he answered, "nobody else is . . . ." This was some way from being true. There were others who stood by him, and of his critics some for whom he cared most soon forgave him.

My next recollection is that of taking Dee Wells, whom I was about to marry, to visit Goronwy in a house which he had taken in Southend. He had invested his savings and Margie's capital in some corner of the building trade, going into partnership with Derek Verschoyle. I never learned exactly how the enterprise failed but was left with the impression that Verschoyle was to blame. Shortly afterwards Goronwy, never himself a driver, suffered the motor accident which nearly cost him his life and left him permanently a little lame. His experiences in hospital are brilliantly described in *A Bundle of Sensations*, in my view the best of all his books, which was published in 1960. By then Margie and he had moved to London, occupying a house in the neighbourhood of Shepherd's Bush. He was supporting his family wholly by his writing. At first he was largely dependent on a retainer from Marks & Spencer which had commissioned him to write a history of the firm. Later he found some security in the regular income which accrued to him as an editor of ENCOUNTER. His monthly column ("R"), written from an independent radical standpoint, was consistently impressive.

Margie was away when Dee and I paid our first visit to Southend, but they met soon afterwards and became the closest of friends. Throughout the years that followed the four of us dined very frequently together, taking turns as hosts, and more often than not playing rather stormy games of family bridge. We were witnesses to the extraordinary courage with which Margie bore the slow spread of cancer that eventually brought about her death. When Goronwy was himself attacked by the disease, he displayed similar fortitude, but the devotion of his children could not make up for his loss of Margie. Nevertheless he kept his literary talent, his gift for friendship, and his almost uncanny perceptiveness. When I last saw him in hospital a few days before his death, his conversation was as alert and penetrating as it had always been. He was a very gifted writer and an exceptional man.

SIR ALFRED AYER *was Wykeham Professor of Logic, University of Oxford, from 1959–1979. Among his books are "Language, Truth and Logic", "The Problem of Knowledge", "Probability and Evidence", and "The Central Questions of Philosophy." His autobiographical work, "Part of My Life", was published in 1977 by Collins.*

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Donald McCormick

I ONLY CAME TO KNOW Morgan Goronwy Rees well during the last three years of his life, something for which I am both grateful and sad. By that time he was suffering from the terrible disease which in the end killed him, often unable to sleep for whole nights at a time, frequently in great pain.

Yet, somehow, it never seemed to matter. He himself never allowed his suffering to dim his zest for life, nor to impinge upon friends or acquaintances. Indeed, he would never touch on the subject of illness except to explain occasional absences: "I have to keep popping in and out of hospital for treatment, which is a great nuisance and takes up a great deal of time when I might be enjoying myself with you and others", he once wrote. I cannot recall anyone who died with more dignity and gaiety, and who, even in the last year of his life, could take great delight in an impromptu party. Perhaps there was something of the Welsh influence in all this—not the influence of the Welsh Calvinism of his father, but rather that described by Professor Gwyn Jones as "the product of a passionate, rebellious and humorous generation with a huge delight in life and no small relish for death." For Goronwy, like Dylan Thomas's Uncle Jim, could "set the darkness on fire."

Since his death voices have been raised—some anonymously, others more openly—questioning the reliability of Goronwy as a witness to those multifarious investigations which can perhaps be simply summed up as the quest for moles inside the British Establishment. His contemporary, A. J. P. Taylor, in a letter to *The Observer*, following Andrew Boyle's revelations of what Goronwy told him, said: "I knew Goronwy Rees for more than 40 years and spent many delightful hours in his company. It had not occurred to me until now that he could be regarded as a reliable witness."

For the record, I should like to confirm that practically all that Goronwy told to Andrew Boyle he also told to me. Indeed, what is remarkable is that the petty details tally on all essential points. Perhaps it is important to add that Boyle and I saw Goronwy separately, never together, and we never at any time compared notes or even met. Naturally there will have been some things that Rees told Boyle that he did not tell me, and vice versa, but as far as I can judge this would be solely due to our somewhat different approaches to the subject.

I first approached Goronwy when I conceived the idea of writing *The British Connection*, the object of which was to give a history of the manipulation of British individuals and institutions by the Russians. I had decided to take as my starting point for this work an evening dress party in 1889, at Cardiff of all places, when a sum of £1,000 was raised in one night for a Russian revolutionary who had sought sanctuary in this country. My aim was to show that generous and idealistic gestures towards oppressed people in the 1880s had been soured into law-breaking by the early 1900s and positive treachery by the 1920s. Goronwy was at once enthusiastic, offering to help in any way possible and adding, "You seem to have launched yourself into very wide and troubled waters, but I've no doubt you will come up with much buried treasure. . . ."

He gave me several days of his time over a period of several months—all of it, I might add, out of sheer good-heartedness and friendship. Heaven knows, in these last few years of his life, after he had lost a great deal of money and his illness precluded extensive activity, he must have needed every penny. Yet he was always willing to give material freely and to help any author who needed to see him.

The irony of it all is that in many respects nobody was better equipped to write a book on this vast subject than Goronwy himself. Not only did he personally know Blunt, Burgess, Maclean and others involved in this infiltration by the Soviet Union, but he also knew and understood their continental counterparts—not the spies of the '40s, but the propagandists of the '30s. One of his first words of advice to me was: "Has the name of Willy Muenzenberg come up in your inquiries? In my opinion, he had by far the greatest influence of any Soviet agent on English opinion in the '30s, though by way of propaganda, not espionage. . . ."

There was never anything vindictive or paranoic about Goronwy's desire to see this whole subject of infiltration by the USSR thoroughly ventilated, though he certainly did not disguise his contempt for those who wanted to have it both ways, not merely betraying their country, but accepting honours from it and making the most of the British way of life. I never had the full details from him, as the project was relatively hush-hush, but I do know that he visualised trying to have some kind of confrontation with Philby and Maclean in the form of a

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television programme and that he sought permission to go to Moscow. This was at the end of 1977, so presumably the Soviet Embassy did not provide visas. This was not altogether surprising, as Goronwy would certainly not have been as obliging to the Russians as was the late Tom Driberg when he interviewed Guy Burgess.

TO RETURN to the question of Goronwy's reliability as a witness: surely events following the publication of *The Climate of Treason* have proved his reliability on most counts. My own experience was that a great deal of what he told me could be amply confirmed from other sources. This, I might add, applies particularly to those allegations of pro-Soviet activities on the part of some former members of the Security Services which are so vigorously disputed by their ex-colleagues. Goronwy undoubtedly had good reason for feeling that he had been badly let down by some of his old friends who had served in the Security Services, but I never heard him complain unduly on this score. Indeed, what I learned of their very shabby treatment of him came from other sources altogether. No, Goronwy's motives were simply a desire to set the record straight and a feeling—as he often told me—that if many of these matters were kept quiet any longer, there was a danger that they would remain buried away in musty archives indefinitely, or be impossible to record accurately because those directly involved would have died. Alas, this was only too true: three of my own best informants among people who had participated in these affairs died while I was doing my own research.

One day Goronwy's reliability as a witness will be, I am convinced, completely demonstrated. He was a cautious investigator both as an academic and a journalist and—perhaps the best test of all of his reliability—as a highly efficient staff officer under Field-Marshal Montgomery. Having taken part in the ill-fated Dieppe Raid, Goronwy decided that both the Army and the Navy needed to have a greater understanding of each other's problems if Combined Operations were to succeed. As one who served as a landing-craft commanding officer both in North Africa and the Normandy campaigns, I can testify that all those Army officers and NCO's who had served under Montgomery invariably understood the naval problems and were that much more effective in helping us to cope with them. When, on one trip across to Sword Beach, I asked the Army OC aboard my ship why this was, he replied: "There's a jolly sensible fella called Goronwy Rees on Monty's staff. Went to Dieppe and all that. Put us very properly in the picture so that we now appreciate beaching problems and getting ashore quickly dry-shod. The chap even gave us your naval lingo."

ONE FINAL, LOW-KEY appraisal of Goronwy—and this concerns something we both shared: we were both born and brought up in Wales. We shared the same background of vigorous nonconformist liberalism, the magic of the *hwl* in Welsh chapel sermons and the highly pressurised educational system of nearly all Welsh schools in that period. It was not until I escaped over the border to school at Oswestry that I found the pace was eased and rather more attention paid to social graces and attainments. Goronwy never escaped in his schooldays; he went straight from Cardiff High School to Oxford, whereas I went from public school at Oswestry straight into journalism. Perhaps not unnaturally he felt he owed everything to Oxford in later life, while I have always felt my greatest blessing was to have been brought up in Wales. Maybe this accounted for Goronwy's lack of sympathy for Welsh nationalism which was a factor in his never settling down in the environment of the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth when he became Principal. On the other hand it might well account for something in my make-up—defect, if you like, or quirk, if you are more generous—which echoes those mocking lines of Dylan Thomas—"To shield the glistening brain and blunt the examiners."

But Goronwy had above all else the peculiarly Welsh sense of humour. It shone through not in a melodramatic way, which is the style of much Welsh humour, but in a subtle, low-key nuance of voice and, above all, gesture of eyes and mouth. He would give one of those rare, expansive smiles of his, as much as to say, "As you and I know." Probably not even Goronwy himself knew how much he retained of that superb talent for acting—often unconsciously—which the Welsh possess.

And here I have to admit that whereas Goronwy was entirely of Welsh stock, I was simply Anglo-Scot born in Wales.

David Footman

I FIRST MET Goronwy, then an Army major, through Guy Burgess in 1943. "He's frightfully nice", Guy warned me, "but sometimes does most awful things. . . ." What he had done to shock Burgess is something I never discovered.

I got to know him after his return to civilian life. Along with his warmth and his gaiety I was struck by his enormous capacity to be interested and his uncanny quickness at seizing the point. One noticed, too, that when he turned up at a party the girls all felt it was a much better party than it had been before he arrived.

I first saw Margie at their house in St John's Wood. I was advised her Lancashire traditions

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would ensure I got an excellent dinner, and that was indeed the case; thereafter I saw much of both of them. On one occasion a small daughter showed me upstairs and I found them on the bed, the counterpane littered with bills, correspondence, and cheque books. Margie explained that every three months or so they took a morning in bed to straighten out the household accounts.

This practice was short-lived. Goronwy was never good at answering letters (a weakness that cost him some friends) or at remembering to pay the gas bill. He was helpless over household chores. Margie took exclusive charge of the running of the home, of social obligations, and indeed of much else. I doubt if Goronwy had ever thought of learning to drive; Margie had been a car addict ever since (perhaps before) she was old enough to have a licence. She drove skilfully, and very fast.

Goronwy was then with the firm of his friend Henry Yorke (the novelist Henry Green); Pontifex, in Birmingham, makers of brewers' machinery. It was a new world to him, but all his life he was breaking fresh ground and finding it of absorbing interest. He invited me up to see it and his delight was infectious—the business itself, the personalities of the skilled craftsmen, the dogmas, procedures and mystique of the Coppersmiths' Union. (Not to mention the small Edgbaston hotel where the firm put me up, and where, in the grim austerity of 1947, I was asked if I preferred two, or three, fried eggs with my bacon at breakfast. . . .)

In due course Goronwy was appointed Estates Bursar of All Souls. The work fitted in with his commitments to Pontifex, and entailed visits to the College properties dotted about the country from Romney Marsh to Yorkshire, opening up new and fascinating vistas. The family (there were now four children) moved to Sonning on Thames. With a delightful home and two congenial jobs all seemed set fair. And then, in late May 1951, Guy Burgess returned from Washington D.C., and a few days later disappeared.

Goronwy has told the story in *A Chapter of Accidents*. I was the contact to whom he phoned that Sunday evening and who passed the message to MI5 on the Monday morning. Late that afternoon, following his interview with MI5, he came round to my flat in a state of complete nervous exhaustion and I heard for the first time of Guy's attempt to recruit him some twelve years previously. Even so I was slow to realise the full impact on him of the Burgess affair. For me Guy had been a highly entertaining partner for a drink or a meal; and his occasional harangues on the working out of "dialectical materialism" in world affairs had seemed one of those parlour games to which my intellectual friends were prone. Long afterwards Goronwy suggested it was my inherent lack of interest in ideas that acted as effective insulator. But for him the affair was a crushing burden, as *A Chapter of Accidents* makes very clear.

The same book also gives Goronwy's account of his Aberystwyth experience. I went to see him there twice, the first time with Margie's mother and sister who were concerned about her. The birth of the twins back in 1948 had been extremely difficult and the doctors had warned against any further children. But Margie liked having babies, and we arrived to find her recovering well, little Matthew in good shape, the new home up to a mother-in-law's standards, Goronwy much relieved and full of his plans, though conscious of the clouds on the horizon. By my second visit, in 1956, the clouds were looming more darkly. Margie, for all her loyalty, was frank in her dislike of the place and the people. Burgess and Maclean had surfaced in Moscow, and weighed heavily on Goronwy's mind. He showed me the piece he had written, which I was to find so fantastically unlike what *The People* printed a few months later.

I saw him in the Ascot hospital, "The Great Good Place" of *A Bundle of Sensations*; again at Westcliff-on-Sea during his brief and unhappy involvement in the building trade. I was then in Oxford, so saw him only occasionally during his gallant campaign to establish himself in the literary world. He and Margie always seemed to be moving house. From Westcliff to Highgate, then to South Terrace in South Kensington, then to a top floor flat in Prince of Wales Terrace, with a view over Kensington Gardens to Kensington Palace.

HIS FINANCIAL POSITION was eased by a contract to write the history of Marks & Spencer. He was given a room in the head office in Baker Street, and to visit him there was to find him in yet another new and fascinating world—the business, the procedures and mystique of the management, the personalities (including Lord Marks himself, who took a fancy to Goronwy and often called him in). *St Michael* took a long time to write and was then meticulously vetted by the directors. It is a good book as published; but one wistfully thinks of what

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it might have been were it not so necessarily official.

There came a set-back. The Inland Revenue caught up with them. The lease of the Prince of Wales Terrace flat was hastily sold, and for some time Goronwy and Margie led a gipsy existence including a spell in a barge near Battersea Bridge. When things stabilised they took a house in Royal Crescent, Holland Park, and things were now going better for them. Goronwy at last seemed fully recovered from his accident. Matthew was still at home but the other four children were out in the world, and there was all the interest of their very individual careers. Lady, allegedly a Shepherd's Bush sheepdog, took her place in the household. Goronwy joined ENCOUNTER as a contributing editor. He liked the people there and he liked the atmosphere; and his monthly column, signed *R*, was what many of us first looked for when a new issue appeared. Goronwy was adept at puncturing nonsense, and there was plenty around to be punctured. It is typical that it did not occur to him that these articles could make a book; indeed, if I had not volunteered to go through the back numbers *Brief Encounters*, which Chatto & Windus published in 1974, might never have appeared.

The move from Royal Crescent to Pyrmont Road was a challenge to Margie as there was much to be done in both house and garden. The work was satisfactorily completed and all seemed set fair. Then her health began to fail; the doctors diagnosed cancer. There were brief flashes of optimism; I remember talk of adjusting the car's controls so that she could drive again. But the disease continued its relentless course. For four long years on going to see them one was conscious of unquenchable spirit in a world without hope. Before the inevitable end they took a short lease of a house in Strand-on-the-Green, so that Jenny and grandchildren could move in with them, and Margie could watch the boats on the river.

Goronwy told me the two of them had often discussed how he was to arrange his life when left alone. In the event none of the plans seemed to work. It was a black period, of intense depression and sagging health. Finally his sons installed him in a small flat in Bedford Park. But that was only a short time before his break-down and removal to the strike-bound Charing Cross Hospital.

He liked to have visitors there. In spite of the pain and the discomfort he seemed to me to be more relaxed than I had known him for years. It was a profound relief to him that the Blunt affair had come into the open, and in his interviews with Andrew Boyle he could at last speak freely. He wanted news of old friends, and there were touches of the old gaiety. Above all he was deeply touched by the way Daniel and his other children had rallied round him. As for himself, on my last visit he was talking happily of a nursing home set in the woods near Nettlebed; Daniel and Lucy had been down to see it and given a good report.

Next day a phone call told me he had died in his sleep.

John Morgan

DEATH MUST BE peculiarly infuriating to the autobiographer of distinction, his tale irritatingly incomplete. How Goronwy would have savoured the strange but not inexplicable behaviour of the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth, of his home town, of the institution which he had headed so sensationally in the 1950s, when they heard of his death. The custom at the College has always been to lower the flag to half-mast when anyone associated with the place, or working there, whether cook, cleaner or lecturer, dies. The flag, to the disgust of many, was not lowered for Goronwy, and this in a country famous for funereal or any mortuary celebration. Why should this have happened when for many Welshmen Goronwy Rees represented all that was best in the people, a man of scholarship, wit, easy charm, a soldier who had played rugby and wrote like an angel, beloved of women: indeed was everything a generation aspired to?

That "The Establishment" should dislike him was understandable. He detested its Welsh form as he did its English. He expressed his contempt freely and more directly than his analysis of espionage more subtly did of the English. His brief period as Principal at the College established his as strongly as any figure in the Mabinogion in Welsh mythology, the myth usually having nothing at all to do with the facts of the case. When we were making a documentary television film together 18 months before he died—"*A Man of His Time* (a portrait of Goronwy Rees)"—we discovered that popular legend had it that he was sacked for crimes that ranged from drinking in pubs, consorting with

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homosexuals, non-paying of bills, cursing Wales, and wearing suede shoes. That he had voluntarily resigned with no stain on his character did not seem to be generally known. Some members of that "Establishment" even expressed their disapproval to me that we should be making the film at all.

Had he been English he would not have been so disliked by the entrenched and frequently obscurantist authorities in that small town at that time. (Matters have improved, as he acknowledged when we revisited the place.) His trouble was that he was Welsh-speaking; his father had been a famous preacher there; yet here he was advocating total freedom of enquiry, believing students had a status equal to professors, even meeting them socially for a drink: he painted the walls of the old hotel (which was as the heart of the college buildings) *pink*. He was quite unabashed that it was *The People* newspaper—and here even some of his friends could not follow him—which had published his anonymous account of his friendship with Guy Burgess. His view was that if you believe in free speech and the freedom of the press, which newspaper was irrelevant.

To me he always maintained, however, and how mischievously I cannot tell, that the root of the quarrel had to do with a piece of his behaviour which had nothing to do with scholarship, college democracy, or whatever, but with a more fundamental aspect of provincial life: a land deal. As Principal, he decided it would be beneficial to the University to sell land it owned (much of it of poor quality) both to raise money and to provide smallholders with a freehold. This having been agreed, he then astonished the town by deciding to bring in an English agent to handle the business. Being a Cardiganshire man himself and generally familiar with the ways of Welsh politics—the subject of one of his early novels—he thought that, to put it delicately, the arrangements might be better carried through with a "neutral" in command. If in his youth he was to learn a lot about the wrath of women scorned, it was as nothing to that of men who saw their commission melt away, and, more, into the pockets of the English.

THE SUGGESTION HERE, of course, was that just as Goronwy wrote so perceptively about traitors to Britain, he, in his own way, was being a traitor to Wales, to the culture of his homeland. This absurd view, naturally, was rejected by most sentient Welshmen, but was to be revived in the last ten years of Goronwy's life by a distinct group of compatriots. In this period he appeared frequently on television, being a producer's delight: for a man who maintained he was a poor public speaker, his articulacy in interviews was unmatched, while his celebrated good looks transformed themselves into a facial expression of his experience. But much of the time he chose to express himself with his usual indifference to tact on the questions of Welsh Nationalism and, especially, the Welsh language, which dominated politics in the Principality. Here, again, he attracted a special fury because he was Welsh-speaking and yet would say: "Welsh Nationalism is an unmitigated evil. . . ."

The general tenor of the attack on him may be gauged from a review in the Welsh magazine *Planet* of the autobiographical volume *A Chapter of Accidents* (1972). The critic is Harri Webb, a poet who has translated 14th-century Welsh verse into demotic English. He begins as he means to carry on: "In his public posturings Mr Goronwy Rees resembles nothing so much as an ageing daughter of the night, blissfully unaware of her faded charms, oblivious of the passing of the Street Offences Act, parading in the pathetic finery of a bygone day on some windy corner long deserted by the traffic of pleasure. . . ." Conceding that the author writes well, nevertheless "he loses no opportunity of decrying everything Welsh, is tireless in advocating the superior values and standards he claims to have found elsewhere."

A rousing conclusion puts the finger on both the author and the essence of complaint: "He is a bundle of sensations, a chapter of accidents, incensed that the young of today are beginning to think well of themselves and their country, and are concerned to tackle its problems, miffed that they are not interested in the meretricious trash which has so dazzled his own eyes, offering them nothing but his obsessive chronicles of snobbery, sodomy and treachery. . . ."

All this because Goronwy did not sympathise with the political Nationalist Movement and, worse, on balance believed that the struggle to preserve the Welsh language would prove harmful to the Welsh community. This last view he held because he saw a new generation becoming obsessed with the survival of the language—his own first language—at the expense of the ideas it was intended to express. He believed and he was in no way alone in the belief (although I don't share it myself), that a fanatical concern would produce a paronoia dangerous to Welsh health. He was fearful that the agonies of the language's decline might produce violence in a gentle society. Sometimes, perhaps, he didn't help his argument by cheerfully, if accurately, pointing to the glories of the English language available to all, and how better for young Welsh speakers to abandon ship and swim in the glories of Shakespeare before all sank.

In the uproar he remained unabashed, partly because that was his nature, but also because he was aware that quite enough of his compatriots were aware of his perceptive writing about Nazi Germany before the War, his novels—and especially *Where No Wounds Were,* that pioneering study of brainwashing—and his capacity to

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describe so elegantly a life that touched on so many of the wretched and heroic experiences of the century.

MANY IN WALES who raged against him would probably be surprised, if unappeased, to learn how pleased he was, even proud, to have been a Welshman. In the last recorded conversation I enjoyed with him after a trip we had made to Berlin, Vienna, and Geneva, beginning on his 68th birthday, he speculated on how much his bilingualism had contributed to his character and view of life. He concluded that it probably had in that his perpetual sense of non-existence, of being a bundle of sensations, sprang from uncertainties created by two languages being equal forms of expression as soon as he could speak. I believe there is some scientific basis for this belief in a mild schizophrenia of linguistic origin. Just as much, though, he liked to think that had he not been brought up in the kind of Welsh family he recalled with so much affection, he would not have been spoiled by his mother, and so would never as firmly held pleasure to be the first principle. He might otherwise have suffered dismaying attacks of responsibility and ambition. In which case—although he would never say this himself—he could not have given so many of us over so many years such delight in his company.

Jonathan Power

I AM afraid it has become clear to me in the year since Goronwy Rees' death how little many of his friends and acquaintances really knew him. He was a private person, whose true character was revealed not so much in conversation, but in what he wrote.

This is not to suggest that he gave nothing away in personal contact. He did; and I knew myself how much I benefited from small doses of it. But those sharp moments of analysis and presentation where the deeper emotions are laid bare were saved, by and large, for the printed word, rather than poured out with the claret. There were, though, exceptions. One is still haunted by his outpourings to Andrew Boyle, as he lay dying—that Anthony Blunt had been a millstone through most of his adult life; every move to rid himself of the weight seemed to tie it even more firmly round his neck.

My own conversations were mostly confined to ENCOUNTER lunches over brown bread, white cheese, and sour pickles, when Goronwy would leap at whatever topical theme one wished to bring up. It seemed not Goronwy's manner to raise a subject. Was it that he had little rhetorical confidence in his own spoken thoughts and perhaps only secretly, like a Brontë, confided in handwritten form the storms within and the themes which did move him?

By pushing my questions forward I tried to draw from him what I needed to know. Sometimes, his thoughts on a new piece I'd submitted to ENCOUNTER—after all, he had spotted my first and unsolicited article in the dusty heap that often lies for months, unread, on the Editor's desk; or sometimes more guidance on the art of writing good prose (he found it difficult to believe that he was, as I felt, the most accomplished columnist in the business), or sometimes "fisherman's stories" about the physical pain of writing, of putting things on paper.

He was one of Isaiah Berlin's natural foxes, a pluralist like many of his favourites, Aristotle and Herzen, Goethe and Joyce, Tolstoy and Diderot. He was not a hunting hedgehog, a Plato, Dante, Rousseau, Marx, Dostoevsky or Wagner. I thought that the passage in which Berlin described Alexander Herzen was, when I came across it, apposite to Goronwy Rees:

> "He dealt with anything that seemed to be of topical interest. He exposed, he denounced, he derided, he preached. . . . He was a journalist of genius, and his articles written with brilliance, gaiety and passion, and were read by radicals and conservatives alike. . . . [He] believed in the noble instincts of the human heart. His analysis grew silent and reverent before the instinctive impulses of the moral organism or the sole, indubitable truth of existence. He admired anything which he thought to be noble or passionate impulse, however mistaken; and he never amused himself at its expense."

Of the hundreds of columns Goronwy has left behind, two stand out for me, partly because they speak, more eloquently than anything else I've read, to the central political issues of our lives, and partly because they are slightly contradictory, indicative of Goronwy's inability to square any circle, as long as there was an angle or a curve still to be considered.

The first was his comment on Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*, that appeared in ENCOUNTER in September 1978. He attempted, unsuccessfully, to find some other work to which the Gulag can be compared. ". . . where else in literature would one find so complete, so self-consistent, so all-embracing a world, with its

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own laws and principles, its own history and topography and cosmology, and populated by thousands of individuals whom we come to know intimately, such as Solzhenitsyn has created in *The Gulag Archipelago*?" He then suggested it could perhaps be in Dante's *Divina Commedia* only to remark:

> "Yet here again the comparison fails, for the *Divina Commedia* is a creation of sublime art and imagination while *The Gulag Archipelago* is a work of the harshest and most relentless realism; while again, in the *Divina Commedia* the human soul emerges from the depths of sin and suffering until it can once more see the stars, but from the darkness of *The Gulag Archipelago* there is no such release.
> "It is only in their vast scope and immensity that the two books resemble each other; in everything else there is no likeness between the messages they offer to suffering humanity. Only in reading *The Gulag Archipelago* one cannot help thinking again and again that the tortures inflicted by Dante on the souls of the damned in the Inferno are as nothing compared with those perpetrated in the Archipelago on the living flesh of for the most part innocent men and women."

Goronwy believed that not in this century had any book had more political impact than *The Gulag Archipelago*, and his own brief essay, communicated the intensity and the anguish of the great work itself.

> "To maintain amicable relations with a state which wanted and continues to maintain the Gulag Archipelago, is quite demonstrably to traffic with the powers of darkness."

Less than a year later, however (in ENCOUNTER, April 1979), Goronwy was seized by a piece of diplomacy whose political impact was as devastating as had been Solzhenitsyn's book—President Jimmy Carter's decision to recognise the People's Republic of China without any prior warning either to the American people or, more important, to the Soviet government. This momentous act had come just when the Soviet Union looked poised to move the SALT negotiations to a swift conclusion, and nothing could have seemed to the Moscow politburo a more conscious effort to end the intimate relationship of *Realpolitik*, painfully built up brick by brick by Leonid Brezhnev, Henry Kissinger, and Richard Nixon, where power was *de facto* shared between America and the Soviet Union.

To Goronwy, playing the China card was risking a relationship where the two powers had arrived at "a kind of intuitive understanding of just how far they can go with each other" by flirting with a nation whose history comprises "an incomprehensible jumble of riddles, conundrums, fragments of jigsaw puzzles which refuse to fit into any comprehensible pattern."

There were still, in the fine print, echoes of Goronwy's early denunciation of the Soviet Union —"a barbarous machinery of government." But there was more of Russia as "a great people and a great nation, of whose life by now we know a great deal."

Was it that we could understand the Russian people in a way we never could the Chinese? "*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* is not merely a prison camp memoir: it is also the life of a people." Compare this with *The Great Leap Forward* and *The Fall of the Gang of Four*. "They read", Goronwy remarked, "like titles from Sax Rohmer's adventures of Fu-Manchu . . . ."

Goronwy perceived with frightening clarity the historic demise of the era of *Détente*. He saw the shadowy side of America developing military links with China. He understood, too, how Soviet paranoia could unsettle a fragile political equilibrium. He foresaw, making President Carter look more Alice-in-Wonderlandish than he already does, that because of all this "1979 may inaugurate one of the most difficult, precarious and potentially dangerous periods in superpower relationships since the end of the last World War. . . ."

WHERE did Goronwy's keen and uncommon political sensitivities derive from? He knew few politicians or diplomats. The George Balls, David Owens and Louis de Guirancauds were not exactly the kind of people with whom he had friendships or even had personal knowledge of. But Goronwy studied, listened, took books seriously, played with ideas, held fast to the earnest contemplation of life and society. He was a man of priceless perception, and I for one will never forget him.

Old Ground

These are the first graves for
Two centuries, on this south side.
The church has stood six more.

The seasons are long,
But planting time's come round.

John Loveday

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NOTES & TOPICS

European Diary

Milosz, the Unknown

Frankfurt-am-Main

THE NEWS of the new Nobel Prize-winner for literature came through on the Thursday morning and, as these things happen, I had just been informing the Editor of ENCOUNTER that my essay on Czeslaw Milosz which had been promised for this number could well be postponed for a while. My last-minute suspicions were that the Swedish Academy would be turning to somebody like Graham Greene or V. S. Naipaul whose work was so easily accessible. And so there I was with a winner, but with no bets placed.

Milosz's German publisher was even worse off, for he had no books at all in print; and only the paperback reprints of *The Captive Mind* (1951) and of a small volume of decent translations of the Polish poems could claim the honours of the day. A long queue of publishers and literary agents of a dozen different languages began to form outside Stand T-908 in Halle 5 of this gigantic Book Fair to try to pick up copies of Milosz's *oeuvre*; but even the *Niezalezna Oficyna Wydawnicza* soon ran out of their *samizdat* copies. At the official Polish stand there were, of course, none; but the Warsaw authorities seemed to be pleased at the choice of a Pole (although born in Lithuanian Vilna, then as now Russian-controlled) and soon a large blow-up of a passport photo was patriotically adorning their national exhibit.

The local literary journalists, usually among the best-informed cosmopolitan spirits in Europe, were not exactly faced with an embarrassment of riches. On the basis of a slim book of political essays and an even thinner book of verse they had to fill columns in the ambitious literary supplements which every October flood the kiosks of the Frankfurt Book Fair. Small wonder that so many commentators tried to make brisk capital out of ignorance by turning the whole affair into a political *cause célèbre*. According to the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, the strike at Gdansk cast the deciding vote for a Polish prize-winner. Would perhaps some political victory in Rome have tipped the scale in favour of Alberto Moravia? In any case, the winner in a season of "Papal chic" just had to be a Pole.... Not having read any of the books, the critics could perhaps be forgiven for assuming that simply being a very good writer had nothing to do with the matter at all.

AT ONE OF those elegant and excited literary luncheons at the de luxe *Hessische Hof* hotel I listened to one of the great professionals among the Book Fair élite.

"What's his name again? Milos? Milosch? Never heard of him. But obviously, after Wojtyla and Walesa, it was time for a Pole, and Stockholm has a nose for these things. All a matter of politics, no doubt about it...."

What was really in no doubt was the embarrassment of having some quarter-of-a-million books exhibited at the Fair, and none by the "obscure" poet who takes the Nobel prize. The English were prepared with shelves of Greene and Naipaul, and the Italians were even hedging their Moravia bets with Leonardo Sciascia. But Czeslaw Milosz? With the exception of a few university *Slawisten*, one or two exiled Polish men-of-letters (our friend Tadeusz Nowakovski disappeared from circulation for a day to dictate six different articles for German *feuilleton* pages), and your very own ENCOUNTER correspondent, delinquent though he was, few had ever heard of him and hence took the award as a kind of Scandinavian provocation, and in some sense a blow against the book business. How much, after all, are the verses of a Polish poet worth when balanced against the millions of copies of popular world-famous novelists?

What I found painful was the gap between the affluent publishing world and simple cultural information (no, not literary appreciation or aesthetic insight, but simple information), and with what distressing arrogance the vacuum of ignorance gets quickly filled. The newspapers—a factual report in *The Times* (based on valuable notices culled from the *TLS*), a thoughtful evaluation in *Le Monde*—tried to make good and do their reportorial duty. But surely no reader was really taken in: this fellow (what was his name again? Milosch?) could just not have been given the prize for being a good writer....

I happen to have known Czeslaw Milosz for almost thirty years, value everything he's ever written (except perhaps that which I cannot judge, such as his much-praised translations of Shakespeare, John Milton and T. S. Eliot into the Polish) and I trust what I am now reporting is not a caricature of the Book Fair scene. In the copy of the *Corriere della Sera* which I bought at a

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Frankfurt kiosk I found a story from Stockholm to the effect that Polish authors like Isaac Bashevis Singer and Milosz are represented in Sweden by a charming and beautiful publisher (naturally of Polish origin), and that accounts for the Nobel successes. And what Milan knows, Turin knows even better: in *La Stampa* there was the news that the Swedish committee just could not make a choice between the greatness of Borges and Moravia and finally awarded the prize to a man so unknown that nobody could muster polemical arguments against him. This kind of thing—ignorance camouflaged by gossip—I found especially depressing in Italian journals which pride themselves so much on their cultural "*aggiornamento*", their knowledgeability.

AN UNKNOWN SCRIBBLER? Two years ago an international jury awarded him one of the best American prizes, and *World Literature Today* devoted a special issue to his work. His name has appeared in many of the best-known journals, indeed only last month in the *New York Review of Books*. But America is evidently a land and a literature which is far away and about which we know little. Milosz departed our shores (after having lived in Paris when he "chose freedom" from post-War Stalinist Poland) a long time ago. California is indeed distant; a curious French critic was recently told by Milosz's French publisher that, alas, his whereabouts these days was quite unknown. Still, he has been turning out a remarkable series of books, from *Zdobycie władzy* (a novel published by Faber as *The Usurpers* in 1955) to his sensitive memoirs of his East European childhood and a volume of criticism entitled *Emperor of the Earth: Modes of Eccentric Vision* (University of California Press, 1977). But I will leave this to another time; at the moment I want only to record the strange happening.

One should mention the little scandal of last summer when even I (no insider by a long shot) got wind of Milosz's candidacy for the Nobel prize. A Stockholm newspaper reported some confidential exchanges within the Swedish Academy which indicated that contact had been made with the official Writers Union in Warsaw with the result that they had been assured that Polish writers did indeed recognise the man, forgotten or far-away, as one of their greatest national literary figures. This was especially noteworthy since Milosz was only available in Poland in *samizdat* editions "outside the censorship." It is obviously a matter of some European cultural significance if the Poles, unlike the Russians in the case of Solzhenitsyn and of Pasternak, could coolly register the honour, even welcome it, and not explode ideologically at the "provocation." In any event, the man's name was being mentioned for years in informed circles in America and in France[1] as a candidate: that is to say, before there was a Polish Pope and a Polish freedom-fighter of Gdansk to establish any kind of pattern for a hat-trick.

But enough of finger-wagging; annoying the Book Fair élite with imputations of ignorance only brings the counter of what is disdained here as *Besserwisserei*. Who, after all, reads a Polish poem? Let the good European publishers get their best translators busy.

François Bondy

[1] His great-uncle, Oscar de Milosz, was a distinguished French poet, and in 1931, welcoming to Paris his young and gifted nephew, predicted (in an interview) that he would one day be the glory of the family. . . .

"Minotaure", or Surrealist Originality

Paris

IN THE LAST YEARS of the inter-War period the sumptuous surrealist review called *Minotaure* was the Paris meeting point of all the avant-gardes of literature and the plastic arts. After being unobtainable for some forty years, it has now been republished in facsimile.[1]

No other school of literature has ever achieved a relationship with painting to equal its long liaison with surrealism. There have always been writers who have written about painters, and now and then there has been a writer who has understood painters, loved them, even inspired them (or been inspired by them). But never had poets and painters created in such diverse unison as in surrealism. Surrealism made its own painting.

The very first issue of *Minotaure* indicates the protean character of surrealism, the way it embodied and re-embodied itself in the most various objects, or brought these objects to light—a pebble found on a beach, or the work of some forgotten engraver. Its subtitle reads: "*Arts plastiques, Poésie—Musique—Architecture—Ethnographie et*

[1] *Minotaure*, 324 pages, 715 illustrations, 20 colour plates. First volume, containing numbers 1 to 4 of the review, from June to December 1933. Skira/Flammarion, about 300F.

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mythologie—Spectacles—Etudes et observations psychoanalytiques." *Minotaure* was not an exclusively surrealist review, as the mention of music suggests (even if André Breton detested music).

What we might call the more classical *revue d'art* aspects of *Minotaure* retain their interest, but they are submerged in the surrealist mainstream. Published from 1933 until 1939 by a young Swiss called Albert Skira, who was just beginning to revolutionise art publishing, *Minotaure* appeared in eleven issues (two of them double numbers: 3-4 and 12-13). These dates cover roughly the second period of surrealist art. In 1933 surrealism had already given birth to more than a decade of such quantity and quality of *achieved* work that it seemed natural to some critics to post it as officially dead. For the visual arts, a concise guide to the corpse would include Miró, Tanguy, Arp, Duchamp, Dali, Magritte, Ernst, Man Ray, and Masson, a wealth of artists whose abundance is all the greater for its variety. Corresponding or contrasting with Hans Arp's reliefs, Marcel Duchamp's *Bride* and Joan Miró's vivid and lyrical graphics are the heavy, hallucinatory realism of Dali or Magritte, the poignant, diaphanously impalpable "other worlds" of Tanguy, or again the *frottages* and *collages* of Max Ernst.... Add to this list one bird of passage, Picasso, who happened to be in his full surrealist bloom at the moment when *Minotaure* was launched.

So what gifts are we offered by this monster, half-man, half-bull, chosen as a symbol of the forces of the unconscious to give the new review its name and its covers (designed by Picasso, Derain, Dali, Magritte, Matisse, Masson and Miró)? First of all, humour—perhaps the most striking first impression as you leaf through the pages of *Minotaure*. Paul Eluard's collection of postcards, Ubac's photo-reliefs and his "fossils" of the Bourse, the Opéra, the Eiffel Tower; Péret's locomotive overgrown with vegetation; Duchamp's rotoreliefs, with himself as vendor; Dali's paranoiac-critical interpretation of the obsessive image of Millet's *Angelus*, or his statement of the "First Morphological Law of hair in soft structures" ("Horror of hair soaked in mayonnaise; as a matter of principle, the mere fact of the bath or washbasin full to the brim with mayonnaise is very nasty...."). Or again, that picture, whose subject and provenance are still unexplained, which shows a family of "phenomena" in resplendent court dress and equipped with hair of a quite extraordinary mass and form ... and so many other examples to remind us again that surrealism was also enormously funny, and that one of its main sources was Alfred Jarry.

BAUDELAIRE WROTE that "irregularity, which is to say the unexpected, surprise, amazement, is an essential and characteristic element of beauty...." This same irregularity extended inexorably to the review's dates of publication, a matter too trivial to mention had it not given rise in issue No. 12 to a delicious prefatory explanation of the delays in publication, invoking astrology and above all the duty to keep intact the omnipotence of desire. Hazardous though it is to lay down classifications of the content of a publication which was *la vie même*, three headings do seem to emerge: the appearance of new names in painting and sculpture; the use of new forms of expression; and a curiosity of mind which led the surrealists to take an interest in a host of works created outside their own ranks, to discover unrecognised inventors and neglected facets of reality.

The era of *Minotaure* was the time of the international proliferation of surrealism, but far from being vulgarised and adulterated it condensed into several new works. The surrealist psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan published his first writings (on paranoia) in the review. Artists as new, as various, and as widely scattered across the globe as Giacometti, Hans Bellmer, Brauner, Dominguez, Matta, Wolfgang Paalen, Leonora Carrington, Delvaux, Toyen, Balthus, Calder, Ubac—these are only a few of the host of newcomers who thronged its pages during those six years. For some of them (in particular, Dominguez and Brauner) this period is possibly their best, and the same may also be true of Giacometti's fine early period. Bellmer could well be the most *halluciné*, the "wildest" of these young surrealists, and the post-War era was to bring out the full importance of Matta.

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Chileans or Germans, Spanish, English, or Romanian, Belgians, Americans, Czechs—whether or not they were fully paid-up subscribers, surrealism was their centre of attraction, and its unusual selective good fortune in the matter of talent springs out of these pages. Considering that since 1944 almost every writer and every philosopher has been eager to talk about Art, to preach Aesthetics and to act as the one true guide, and that not one of these literary, philosophic or critical schools can properly claim to have fathered an art, it must be acknowledged that surrealism has not been judged at anywhere near its true worth, at least if it is still assumed that it is by its fruits that we judge creative thought.

IN TERMS OF the media employed, the era of *Minotaure* was devoted mainly to the exploration of the entire "extra-pictorial" plastic domain. With the first issue, much of it dedicated to Picasso, André Breton stressed that he was presenting his "*production récente extra-picturale*", as Picasso had made clear on the actual cover of the issue. At that moment Picasso was using the raw presence of objects, natural or otherwise, which he made part of various assemblages. "These objects in themselves", wrote Breton, "will never be too humble or too futile—a shoddy vizier's hat, a fun-fair Mickey Mouse, marmosets, cheap tin toys—to infringe the dignity of that cast-iron personage" on which these accessories are hung. There is nothing here which is at odds with "the insolence of the magnificent *papiers collés* of 1913", themselves the forerunners of the Picasso *tableau* reproduced at the head of the Breton essay—that "common butterfly immobilised forever next to a dry leaf."

Then there were to be Giacometti's sculptures and objects, Picasso's wire sculptures, and his wrought-iron piece erected in a wood and photographed at night by Brassó Brassaï. And (Picasso again) those variations on a feminine anatomy executed with the aid of woodwork designs of the Boulle style, representing geometric elements. Later there would be other variations, like Hans Bellmer's "on the assembly of an articulated girl child" (the Doll). Then Max Ernst's *Key to the fields*, a *poème visible*, and Duchamp's *Green Box*, containing all the documents used in the composition of *The Bride*. In 1936 there was the discovery by Dominguez of his "*décalcomanie sans objet*", and by Paalen of his "*fumages*", which did not interrupt the use of the methods already in practice: *frottage*, *assemblage*, Max Ernst's *collage* novels—ancestors of today's photo-novels!—or the interest in mineralogy and in every kind of object, from the natural to the manufactured, not forgetting natural objects retouched, mathematical objects, sundials and crystals. *La création automatique*, surrealism's central idea, probably found its most convincing applications in the painting of the *Minotaure* period. As Miró stated: "My painting is always born in a hallucinatory state."

Not content with creation, *Minotaure* also made discoveries. It discovered Binet, Duvet, Graf, Friedrich and Arcimboldo (now all so over-exploited); popular images, postcards, graffiti; Nadar, Africa, Mexico; the Parisian *merveilleux*, the automatons, and "ruins of ruins" written about by Péret; shop windows, *les dessins médianimiques*, fashion. It revived *La Dernière Mode*, the review entirely run by Stéphane Mallarmé. Photography, with the original contributions of Man Ray and Brassaï, was in real harmony with the review as a whole. One special issue was devoted to the Dakar-Djibouti expedition, and another to Mexico, though not so much to pre-Columbian art as to the little-known colonial art of Mexico, the surprise of the everyday, and to the genius of the popular wood-engraver José Guadalupe Posada (whose black humour Breton analysed). Today we have done with rediscovering Art Nouveau, Gaudi, and the Bastille *Métro*; but in 1933 to defend and glorify Art Nouveau gave proof of that originality of taste which is surely one of the forms of poetic creation.

YET THE UNEASY political life of Europe in the years 1933–39 is never quite absent from *Minotaure*, as witness the very last piece which André Breton published there, and which I would like to quote, despite its length, because of the relevance of its warning not only to his contemporaries but indeed to ourselves. This is the germ of much that was subsequently written about art committed or uncommitted, politicised or depoliticised, condensed in advance.

"It is staggering to observe that art in France, at the start of 1939, seems mainly concerned to spread a carpet of flowers across a minefield. While a wind of destruction is blowing at every door, to judge by what certain painters (and these not the lesser ones) are exhibiting, they might lead one to think that life is running sweetly and even luxuriously. In the hour when Barcelona is collapsing with hunger under a hellish sky, and when elsewhere the days of freedom seem numbered, nothing in their work reflects the tragic apprehension of their era, their needle is stuck on 'set fair'. . . . To go by the subjects they choose and the way they handle them, their only sensitivity is to the pleasures of the table and the attractions of intimacy conceived solely in the context of affluence. . . .

"Certainly we have less idea than ever of making artistic themes depend strictly on everyday events; we persist in believing that art must above all be love rather than anger or pity. We nevertheless

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reject as tendentious and reactionary any image that the painter or poet of today may offer to us of a stable universe where petty sensory pleasures may be not only tasted but lauded. Right now, their so-called art appears *unsituated* (*non situé*); and that is because the problem is no longer, as it was not long ago, to tell whether a painting 'works' for example in a cornfield, but to see whether it works each day beside the daily newspaper. . . ."

Jean-François Revel

AUTHORS

Vilas Sarang was educated in Bombay, and at Indiana University. He has taught English in Bombay, and more recently in Iraq. Two of his stories have appeared in ENCOUNTER, and others in *The Malahat Review, Mundus Artium, Tri-Quarterly*, and the Penguin anthology *New Writing in India*. He has published a collection of poems, and is currently working on a novel set in Iraq.

George Urban is academic consultant to Radio Free Europe, and recorded his conversation with Leszek Kolakowski on their behalf. Among numerous publications, he has edited *Détente* (1976), *Hazards of Learning* (1977), and *Communist Reformation* Temple Smith, 1979).

Peter Porter's latest book of poems is *The Cost of Seriousness* (Oxford University Press).

Gavin Ewart's collected poems, *The Collected Ewart, 1933–1980*, are published by Hutchinson.

François Bondy is an editor of the monthly *Schweizer Monatshefte* and of *Die Weltwoche* (Zurich).

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Penelope Lively won the first National Book Award for Fiction in 1979 with *Treasures of Time*. Her latest novel, *Judgement Day*, was published in 1980 by Heinemann.

Max Beloff was until his recent retirement Principal of the University College at Buckingham, and from 1957–74 was Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration at Oxford. His most recent book (as co-author) is *The Government of the United Kingdom* (Weidenfeld, 1979).

Lord Chalfont was Defence Correspondent of *The Times* in London from 1961–64, and Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office from 1964 (when he was created a Life Peer) until 1970. He is a Director of IBM UK Ltd, and Vice-President of the European Atlantic Committee. His most recent contribution to ENCOUNTER is "The Berlin Test-Case" (February 1980).

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Peter Porter

English Subtitles

How much we need these annotations
When every frame prepared by the exacting eyes
Is a tableau from a famous series!
I can gaze from the eighth floor of the tower
Quite unconcernedly, but cannot avoid
Registering a fresco; then think of the intensity
When our looking is done within, the promontory
Of dreaming. It's all foreign languages,
Unfamiliar feelings, yet absolutely known
So that the craziest, most autonomous
Bulb-grower or Christmas fantasist
Is an unattainable part of the plot
Helping things make sense, or if rats
Coming ashore bring history with them
It will be hung round the necks of plants
In our well-cued crystal palaces.
And all the magazines I read,
Those articles which make me reach for
My spectacles spotting the word pluralism,
Their substance is our beautiful Northern tongue,
So useful for asking for fasteners in
As well as for caning professors:
I suppose my feeling foreign is just because
I have never got used to ambition
In my friends—how can they think it worthwhile
Dazzling and adoring so persistently,
Waking up to find themselves half-famous?
Although I feel I am becoming extinct,
A sort of adaptation to unlovableness,
I also have my calling, the quest for
Freedom wide enough to die in. Thus spake the words,
Just as I was swearing to abjure them all,
"Perhaps you should say something
A bit more interesting than what you mean."
O bold deliverance! I can face my books
And the well-lit feast of journals,
I am anthropology itself. The used-up world
Becomes my kindly uncle: we are going
To that fascinating film which is always showing
To the cognoscenti. As we sit in the dark,
I turn the more uncomfortable passions
Into slim sentences, such old words
As I know you know. This is language
I would go into the jungle with,
English of the Rider Haggard sort
Reversed-out on the glare of consequence.

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Gavin Ewart

Ode on the death of the Air Commodore

For E. J. Thribb

Oh, Commodore!
You will never drink anything any more!
No more beer, gin, brandy, whisky or wine
that made you feel so fine
and roll down the street lurching out of bars
and causing consternation among cars!

Oh, Commodore!
You have flown to God on that further shore!
You lived in gin with Lady Blank
drinking like two fishes in a fish tank—
this made your brain soften and your arteries harden
and when she locked you out you slept in the garden!

Oh, Commodore!
Alcohol is a deceiver and a most conspicuous whore!
Perhaps I should mention
that every week you drew an Air Commodore's pension
and poured it into the glasses in local pubs,
an old bad-tempered lion and far from its cubs!

Oh, Commodore!
That once-goodlooking head must often have been sore!
You might easily have choked on your own vomit
but, as it happened, far from it—
far quicker and cleaner, a heart attack
as you lay there, completely pissed, on your back!

Oh, Commodore!
Were you once a pilot in Korea, or in the Second World War?
Did you fly bombers or fighters, incredibly brave,
before something gave
and to this one drug you became such a terrible slave?
What went wrong? The Devil is very possessive—
He blotted you out, aphasiac and aggressive!

Oh, Commodore!
Believers say there is Mercy, God doesn't shut the door.
You often had to be helped home,
and all roads lead to Death, as they once did to Rome,
and indeed your life can't have been very funny—
far too much drinking, too much spare time and money!

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Updating Orwell?

Burgess's Future Fictions—By PATRICK PARRINDER

Cacotopia. nonce-wd. *A place where all is evil; opp. by Bentham to* Utopia *"nowhere", taken as* Eutopia *"a place where all is well."*

NOT CONTENT with rescuing the word from oblivion, Anthony Burgess has made three contributions to the genre of the cacotopian vision. *1985*[1] is no more a novel of direct prophecy than were its predecessors, *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Wanting Seed*, both published in 1962. The composite structure of Burgess's most recent future fantasy, a mixture of fiction, essay, dialogue and "interview", should suffice as a reminder that the "parallel worlds" of fiction in no sense foretell the actual shape of things to come. *1985* updates Orwell less in the sense of advancing his *annus fatalis* by one, than of presenting the Worst of All Imaginary Worlds as seen by a representative conservative English writer a generation after Orwell wrote. And if the novella at the centre of the book must be judged a let-down by Burgess's best standards, *1985* deserves attention for its wide-ranging political and social discussions, for the Orwellian pastiche of its note on "Worker's English", and, above all, for its reassessment of that most powerful of modern cacotopias, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

In *1985* Winston Smith's successor is named Bev (=Beveridge, Bevan, or Bevin) Jones, while Airstrip One is Tucland (The United Kingdom/Trades Union Congress), a sinister paradise in which the British worker's exercise of his right to pursue what today's trade-union leaders call his "legitimate aspirations" has led to the brink of political and economic ruin. This is a fairly predictable late-1970s reflection on the state of the nation, and in fact Burgess's scenario is of the rollicking kind once beloved of the British film industry (especially the Boulting Brothers). Bev Jones tears up his union card after witnessing his wife's death in a hospital fire, which for obvious reasons has been left to burn itself out. His first Christmas alone with Bessie, his mentally subnormal teenage daughter, is enlivened by a bakers' strike, a confectionery workers' strike, and a power-workers' strike. The paranoid mood lifts somewhat until, after a period of picturesque vagrancy, Bev is arrested and sent to a T.U.C. Rehabilitation Centre. Here he is browbeaten by a bespectacled academic, physically beaten by two working-class bruisers, and pleasured on the house by Mavis, a former history teacher. Unrepentant, he next joins an armed opposition group led by the self-styled Colonel Lawrence (his real name is Ross), and financed by a consortium of Arab princes, one of whom debauches Bessie. Finally, led by a King who has evidently listened to too many old Goon Show records, Tucland muddles through in defiance both of the Sons of the Prophet and of a threatened invasion by the Russians. Bev is committed to an insane asylum, where he takes his life, as much from boredom as anything else. "History was a record of the long slow trek from Eden towards the land of Nod, with nothing but the deserts of injustice on the way", he reflects.

In Orwellian terms, Tucland burlesques not *Nineteen Eighty-Four* but *The Road to Wigan Pier*, with its injunctions to the middle classes to drop their pretensions and throw in their lot with the workers. Orwell is remembered as a minor social critic (" 'You have nothing to lose but your aitches, he said' ") who died fighting in the Spanish Civil War. The lost aitch is one of the principal features of the new Worker's English. Yet it is evident that some of the sting went out of this anti-socialist satire the moment that Mrs Thatcher won the 1979 election. The essay on Orwell which forms the first part of *1985* may prove to be of more lasting value than the novella which follows it. For here Burgess is concerned with individual freedom at a much deeper level than that of the right not to belong to a trade union.

Burgess reviews *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with a fascinating mixture of blindness and insight. Like other recent critics, he argues that Orwell's future vision is, in some respects, deeply implausible. At times it is no more than a transcription of London at the end of the Second World War. It is also

[1] Anthony Burgess, *1985* (Hutchinson, 1978; Arrow Books, 1980).

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"essentially a comic book", compounded of music-hall grotesqueries and self-lacerating private jokes meant to keep a personal horror at bay. Room 101 in Broadcasting House was the studio from which Orwell broadcast propaganda to India. Hatred of the Enemy was taught to National Servicemen, and Big Brother, Burgess recalls, featured in the advertisements for a pre-war correspondence college. The clocks striking thirteen come from the same stable of humour as Wigan Pier. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* itself, Orwell accused H. G. Wells of populating one of his future cities with armies of debased industrial workers in order to "make your flesh creep." There is an inordinate amount of flesh-creeping in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but very little in Burgess's fictive "sequel", which never for one moment persuades us that it is tragedy rather than farce. Not even *A Clockwork Orange*, despite the reputation of Kubrick's film, haunts us in the way that Orwell's nightmare does. There are, of course, manifest differences of talent and temperament (and arguably Orwell's book is not really as funny as Burgess makes out). Yet Burgess's inability or unwillingness to profoundly disturb our sensibilities also points to the literary and ideological differences between the two writers.

THERE IS, IN Burgess's view, something deficient in Orwell's understanding of the nature of freedom. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is an "allegory of the eternal conflict between any individual and any collective", but it misstates that conflict, since Orwell "could see the possibility of evil only in the State. Evil was not for the individual: original sin was a doctrine to be derided." Against Orwell's secular, liberal-humanist view of man, Burgess sets his own conservative and Christian position based on a synthesis of the Pelagian doctrine of free will and the Augustinian doctrine of original sin. Readers will recognise this position from his previous works: in *The Wanting Seed*, for example, the cacotopian bureaucracy oscillates between extremes of liberal paternalism ("Pelphase") and martial repression ("Gusphase"). The agony of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* results, in his view, from Orwell's dilemma as an "inveterate proponent of free will" and thus of human perfectibility. It is, in fact, proportionate to the depth of its author's commitment to socialism.

At this level the opposition between Orwell and Burgess is that of the radical liable to shattering disillusionment and the conservative immune to political hopes; and these positions are familiar enough. One can answer Burgess by saying that the renunciation of any vision of political progress and change is a genuine impoverishment. Burgess counters the generalisations of socialism by preaching the virtue of individual Christian love. He does not say how we can love our neighbours without wishing to help those of them who are victims of injustice. He suggests Orwell's Pelagianism was a comforting illusion, but it is no less comforting for Burgess to regard this Old Etonian who sought to join the proletariat as a thwarted human being, who would eventually find himself trapped by "a personal despair of being able to love." However, I wish to get beyond the *impasse* of this kind of debate by arguing that Burgess's reading of the text of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has not been close enough. He has manifestly overlooked some of the sources of its universality and power.

He correctly identifies the weakness of Winston's love for Julia, when invoked as a principle on which to base his opposition to the state:

> The main fictional weakness of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* lies here. There is an insufficiency of conflict between the individual's view of love and the State's. Winston and Julia do not oppose to Big Brother the strength of a true marital union and, by extension, the values of the family. They have fornicated clandestinely and been caught naked in the act. There is a sad moment when Julia, whose sole notion of freedom is the right to be sexually promiscuous, gives Winston a potted history of her love affairs. Winston rejoices in her corruption, and Orwell seems to abet the false antithesis—oppose to the moral evils of the State the moral evils of the individual.

It is impossible that Orwell could have been unaware that the Winston-Julia relationship had, as Burgess puts it, "death in it from the start." Who is not shocked by Winston's insistence that, the more corrupt Julia is, the more he loves her? (It is even possible that Julia was shocked.) There are many incidents in the book which refute the allegation that Orwell could see the possibility of evil only in the State. Both as a child and as an adult Winston is capable of evil. As a child he steals his sister's chocolate ration. As an adult he joins (or thinks he is joining) the Brotherhood, promising O'Brien that he will do whatever he is ordered to do, even if it means throwing acid in a child's face. This degrading oath cannot be redeemed by his refusal to betray Julia if asked to—a refusal which, in any case, is initiated by Julia and not by Winston. Winston is certainly not shown as being untainted by evil. But the question of the source of that evil—whether it is innate, or the result of the subtle corruptions of his environment, or even (just possibly) something that has been programmed into him—remains obscure.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Burgess claims, "we hear very little about the scientific takeover of the free mind." It is true that O'Brien requires a *voluntary* submission from Winston. Yet, earlier, Winston experiences dreams and premonitions which help to undermine the idea that he is a free

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agent. He dreams of O'Brien saying "We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness"; he dreams of Julia throwing off her clothes in the Golden Country. It is possible that these premonitions were implanted by the (aptly named?) Thought Police. Where else could they have come from? Until she seduces him Winston hates and fears Julia as an agent of the Thought Police or at least an amateur spy.

Indeed, a spy, or at best a decoy—despite Burgess, and despite the great bulk of Orwell criticism—is what she surely must be. (This is not to deny that she grows genuinely fond of Winston.) Her role in tempting him to his downfall, together with her knowledge of the Inner Party, suggests a Mata Hari rather than a wholesome example of the Liberated Woman. Perhaps, like the history teacher in *1985*, she is both. It is true that Julia is eventually tortured to the point of losing her sexual attractiveness, but on Oceania there is no reason to suppose that a police spy would be safer than a minor official like Winston. Orwell often pokes fun at Winston's paranoia, of which his initial hatred of Julia is an example. Yet in yielding to her advances, as well as to the fascination of O'Brien and to the intoxicating freedom of the room above Mr Charrington's shop, he almost knowingly cooperates in his own betrayal. His experience is not that of a rebel but of a helpless victim, and his moments of lucidity occur between extremes of self-pity and paranoid rage.

IT IS HERE that we must locate the *modernity* (in Matthew Arnold's sense) of Orwell's nightmare; that is, its adequacy as an expression of the human dilemma in an age of guns, bombs, and concentration camps. It is also this feature, leading to Room 101 and to O'Brien's revelation that he knows the content of Winston's dreams, which has led many readers to view *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a sick book, the product of a distraught mind. The ambiguity with which Orwell invests Winston and Julia extends to the one oppositional force in the State, the so-called Brotherhood, into which they are inducted by O'Brien. The oath they take degrades them to a level indistinguishable from the Inner Party or the Thought Police, and, indeed, if it were not so far-fetched, one might suppose that the privilege it brings—that of the opportunity to read *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* by Emmanuel Goldstein—is a privilege of Inner Party membership. Julia's and Winston's refusal to promise to betray one another constitutes disloyalty to the Brotherhood, but, of course, they are later tortured for it by the Party.

In this moment of belated and selfish affirmation of human love (what value can it have when one has promised to throw acid at a child?), Julia prompts Winston to declare the sexual "weakness" that compromises him both as Party member and as the Brotherhood's potential recruit. There is nothing, except the literal terms of the oath—and we know, in Oceania, what they are worth—to contradict the supposition that the mythical Brotherhood *is* the Inner Party. In this case, Winston has narrowly but decisively failed a test which would have made him a potential secret agent for the Party—whether from conviction or from fear of exposure would have made little difference—rather than one of its tortured victims.

The point of such conjectures is to highlight the book's appalling ambiguities; perhaps no one explanation covers all the relevant facts. It is not, surely, simply bad luck on Winston's part that his craving for sympathy and understanding can only be assuaged in the cellars of the Ministry of Love ("the place where there is no darkness.") Where Julia had the unfortunate habit of falling asleep during Winston's harangues, O'Brien is at once his torturer and his closest intimate.

When writing his diary, or in his spontaneous life in the room above Mr Charrington's shop, Winston does momentarily transcend the status of addicted, self-deluded victim which governs so many of his actions. But it is his masochistic weakness which finally enables him to love Big Brother. Burgess argues that a man with a more robust conscience would have been able to discount his enforced betrayal of Julia in Room 101. Between them "an even stronger fidelity—reinforced by renewed hatred of the manipulators"—could have ensued. Whether this is true or not, Winston's defences are sapped as much from within as they are from without. Critics such as Alan Sandison and Christopher Small have examined *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s unresolved ambiguities—the products of a tortured imagination which, apparently, eluded Orwell's own rational control—in specifically theological terms. What emerges from any such examination is that Orwell's theme of self-delusion and inner betrayal states the problem of the individual and the collectivity in a far more penetrating way than do the traditional concepts of "evil" and "original sin" invoked by Burgess. The "free individual" whom Winston sees in O'Brien's mirror—the "inner heart" symbolised by his cherished glass paperweight—can only be a delusion. Winston's inner freedom has been violated at the moment the novel begins.

Yet, though Winston is trapped and internally corrupt from the start, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* still prompts a powerful reaction in favour of human freedom in the minds of its readers. This is the paradox of the naturalistic novel, where a portrayal of men as the helpless victims of their social environment frequently stimulates the reader to outrage rather than despair. Zola distinguished between determinism, which leaves open the

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possibility that social conditions could be altered by human action, and fatalism which holds that they cannot. Yet it is perhaps the fictionality of the naturalistic cacotopia that is at issue, rather than Zola's somewhat dubious distinction. We do not identify with Winston's self-delusions, which at times are clearly intended as shocking. We identify rather with his suffering. The fictional form both subjects us to, and insulates us against, the full impact of Orwell's nightmare. No subsequent reading of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is likely to be as rawly emotional an experience as one's first reading of the book. Yet, after a first reading, Winston and Julia linger in many minds as relatively uncomplicated figures, true lovers and brave rebels.

BESIDE WINSTON SMITH, the heroes of Anthony Burgess's cacotopias are much more straightforward specimens of Bourgeois Man. Tristram Foxe in *The Wanting Seed* and Bev Jones in *1985* are both ex-history teachers whose refusal to conform lands them in a series of picaresque adventures. There is something desultory about their wanderings, so that they strike us more as fictive devices to enable Burgess to unfold their respective societies than as genuine or would-be free spirits. Neither has much life of his own. Since everything they do is "in character", their function is to propagandise for the free individual without ever forcing us to consider what such freedom might mean. Their gestures of independence satisfy the formal demands of the narrative without deeply engaging the reader's imagination.

It is different with Alex, the teenage gang-leader and narrator of *A Clockwork Orange*, who at first glance would appear to represent anything but Bourgeois Man. Yet, though Burgess now looks back on this most celebrated of his novels with some slight embarassment, the lesson of *A Clockwork Orange* is still central for him:

> It is better to have our streets infested with murderous young hoodlums than to deny individual freedom of choice.... The evil, or merely wrong, products of free will may be punished or held off with deterrents, but the faculty itself may not be removed.

Alex, it will be remembered, is imprisoned for manslaughter and then lured into undergoing an experimental Reclamation Treatment by the prospect of an early release. The Treatment consists of aversion therapy which destroys his enjoyment of thuggery, and, as an unforeseen side-effect, of music, literature, and sex. He makes an unsuccessful suicide attempt, after which the effects of the therapy wear off. Subsequently Alex, who has become the leader of another gang, gives up violence of his own accord; he has turned eighteen, nature has taken its course and he is ready to "go straight."[2]

"*Alex* is a rich and noble name, and I intended its possessor to be sympathetic, pitiable, and insidiously identifiable with us", Burgess writes in *1985*. One of its meanings is *a lex*: without a law. Alex is, of necessity, a literary creation, a transformation of the teenage hoodlum into "your little droog", "your Humble [and highly articulate] Narrator." Among Burgess's battery of devices for making him sympathetic are his linguistic command, his love of classical music, and his sense of belonging in the same league of precocious youths as Mozart and Rimbaud. He is one of "Bakunin's Children", the spokesmen of intergenerational warfare to whom Burgess devotes a surprisingly sympathetic chapter in *1985*. In addition, *A Clockwork Orange* suggests its kinship with such novels as J. D. Salinger's *A Catcher in the Rye* and Colin MacInnes's *Absolute Beginners*. Like Salinger's and MacInnes's teenage heroes, Alex has seen it all before he should even have begun. "That was everything. I'd done the lot, now. And me still only fifteen", he reflects in prison. Burgess's characteristic linguistic virtuosity is here deployed in the creation of *nadsat*, a teenage argot based on Russian vocabulary with some added bits of Romany. (The Russian is said to have entered their heads by "subliminal penetration.") Another significant trait, which contributes to our sense that we have here a romanticisation of the bandit or ruffian no less blatant than the left-wing romanticisation of the urban guerrilla, is Alex's obvious attraction towards the bookish types whom he delights in mugging. He has no difficulty in grasping the meanings of the title of the book one of them is writing—*A Clockwork Orange*. After this, it is no surprise that he is able to expound Burgess's own theory of original sin:

> badness is of the self, the one, the you or me on our oddy knockies, and that self is made by old Bog or God and is his great pride and radosty. But the not-self cannot have the bad, meaning they of the government and the judges and the schools cannot allow the bad because they cannot allow the self. And is not our modern history, my brothers, the story of brave malenky selves fighting these big machines? I am serious with you, brothers, over this.

Scratch the most unlikely of Burgess's heroes and he is liable to turn into a history teacher. One can see why its author now describes *A Clockwork Orange* as "too didactic, too linguistically exhibitionist."

[2] Curiously enough, the final chapter in which this happens has been omitted from at least two editions of the book, including that on which Kubrick's film was based. For Burgess's account of how he "weakly agreed" to this excision, see his letter in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 January 1980.

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ALEX'S COUNTERPARTS in *1985* are the still more improbable "kumina youths", bands of Robin Hood-style Blacks who have started an Underground University—staffed by unemployed history teachers!—to keep alive the outlawed traditional culture. They are philosophers of violence, taking their cue from Shakespeare ("Literature teaches revenge") among others. They talk and chant in Latin while engaging in multiple pederastic rape. These amateurs of the *vie de bohème*, late 20th-century style, do not have to be taken seriously; but Alex, who uses Beethoven and Mozart as background music for his private theatre of pornographic violence, evidently does. ("I am serious with you, brothers.") How is it that Alex can indulge his sadistic fantasies to the accompaniment, not of the "hideous, grinding" sounds of Orwell's Two Minutes' Hate, but of the Ode to Joy in Beethoven's Ninth, without internal conflict? Should not such a response to Beethoven be regarded, not merely as startling and brutal, but as psychopathic and perverse? This would seem to be the real problem with *A Clockwork Orange*, though it is one that Burgess would dismiss, apparently, as of no more than secondary interest.

"Oh bliss, bliss and heaven", Alex exclaims, listening to a violin concerto and imagining an orgy of indiscriminate violence against men, women and girls. When he loses his enjoyment of music as a result of the Treatment, the reader is moved to indignation at this destruction of his personality. Yet what Burgess is portraying here is surely a type of mental derangement. It is a bit tame to suggest that this is something Alex will simply grow out of. (Possibly the only thing he can grow up into is a novelist!) At issue here is the idea of the moral neutrality of art, which Burgess asserts in a passage in *1985* where he discusses George Steiner's example of the camp commandant in Nazi Germany, who, having supervised the killing of a thousand Jews, went home to hear his daughter play a Schubert sonata and cried with "holy joy." Burgess argues that there is no real mystery in this:

> The answer is that the good of music has nothing to do with ethics. Art does not elevate us into beneficence. It is morally neutral, like the taste of an apple.

This is scarcely convincing. The camp commandant's achievement, perhaps, was to show how efficient a machine the human brain can be when it is determined, at all costs, to play out a particular role. His impressions are kept in rigidly separate compartments. Art, unlike apples, is man-made and we are right to recognise something perverse in this. Alex's achievement, by contrast, is one of yoking heterogeneous impressions violently together. His is a much more difficult, unlikely, and (it might be argued) insane feat than the camp commandant's,

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since the latter does not find that his holy joy at Schubert's sonata consists in fantasies of killing Jews. If this is correct, we can only consider it a gross sentimentality when, in the chapter he has restored to the most recent (1979) reprint, Burgess shows Alex growing up into "normality."

Our little droog, it turns out, has unconsciously, as it were, cut out a newspaper photograph of a baby and put it in his pocket! Boys will be boys—with, alas, a little of the old ultra-violence—but one day they grow up, and you can tell by the fact that they start dreaming of a son. The truth is that Alex's path to normality can only be miraculous or fraudulent (he is, let it be remembered, a first-person narrator). The suggestion that nature, by an unexplained miracle, could do the job bungled by therapy seems confused, and perhaps even dishonest; this is not the sort of ambiguity that enriches a novelist's portrayal of character. Both *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Wanting Seed* have upbeat endings, invoking a philoprogenitiveness which seems to owe as much to divine grace as to biology. The nightmare of cacotopian perversity and sterility has lifted. The fictional part of *1985* does not end in this manner. Bev Jones, having utterly failed in his mission of protest—a mission conferred upon him by the last, unforgiving words of his dying wife—has no choice left but to commit suicide. His is a thoroughly honourable suicide, but is not one that makes our flesh creep or interferes, even in the smallest way, with our enjoyment. In artistic terms, does Bev Jones amount to much more than his cardboard adversary, the Tucland emblem of Bill the Symbolic Worker? *1985*'s portrayal of a Last Bourgeois Man so sure of his own identity, so free of traumas, so innocent of any complicity with the forces that have defeated him, belongs to the entertainment industry rather than to that future time to which, "from the age of doublethink", Winston Smith sent his greetings.

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[1] *Earthly Powers*. By ANTHONY BURGESS. Hutchinson, £6.95.

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very nature given a view of the world that is in one sense specially charged; more significantly, he is given a view of love—homo- or hetero- that is weary and embittered. Sex begets suffering, in Toomey's world; the sexual life portrayed is the seedy unloving frenzy of one-night stands, street Arab prostitutes, of bitchiness and affectation. And this is a world as distant surely from mundane homosexual love as the brothel is from the marriage bed. But a stance of such exaggeration is an essential part of the novel's flavour: it is a book larger than life in every sense, in the scale of its events, in the glitter of its characters, in the richness of its language.

The second theme is theological: the nature of evil itself. Toomey, throughout his life, is locked in friendship and argument with his sister's brother-in-law, Carlo Campanati, a vigorous ebullient Italo-American priest who eventually becomes Pope Gregory XVII, succeeding Pius XII. Carlo weaves in and out of the narrative from the moment we first meet him, drinking and gambling and expounding his theories, until his death, famous and revered and on the way to sainthood. Early in his career he acquired a reputation for efficient exorcism, which gives his creator an opportunity to define his views through the medium of a long sermon on the subject: "How do we define evil? . . . . As a principle, an essence designed to counter God's good and, through a series of acts of war, eventually to defeat it. . . . He gave to His creatures the awful and mysterious benison of freedom of choice . . . we may say that man plays on a key-board the melody of evil, but he is not its com-poser." And this creed of course makes Carlo in Catholic terms a theological eccentric, denying the doctrine of original sin, insisting on the externality of evil while accepting God's purpose in presenting man with freedom of choice. We watch his progress, both spiritual and political, ranting and fighting, defying the Nazis, scheming, bulldozing, emerging as a pontiff for the people, barnstorming America, putting forward the argument from design on the NBC network, preaching to blacks in Harlem. He is a memorable figure.

Fiction and history are interwoven: Keynes, Pound, Joyce, Forster mingle with Toomey and Carlo Campanati and an old buffer English poet and a malevolent ex-lover of Toomey's in a kaleidoscope of meetings and partings in England, America, Malaya, Malta. The realities of the Nazi death-camps, Hiroshima, the Lateran Treaty, tur-bulence in Africa and the Far East, changing opi-nions and abandoned attitudes are interspersed with fictions like the mass slaughter of a Californian religious sect whose demented leader, God Manning, is by an awful irony the child whose miraculous healing long ago in a Chicago hospital is the now dead Carlo's credential for canonisation: a masterly device. There are digressions on literature and the cinema and the tarot pack and crap-shooting and—above all, since Anthony Burgess has ever been a logodaedalus—language. *Mephitic; brindized; alveolizing; diastema; cecity*—Burgess readers are expected to keep on their toes, semantically.

One must suppose some identification between author and narrator, if only because Toomey himself emerges as so much more fastidious and erudite a character than the kind of books and plays he writes would lead us to suppose. The work is Maughamesque; he is not, except in sexual inclinations. ". . . how far could I claim a true knowledge of the factuality of my own past, as opposed to pointing to an artistic enhancing of it, meaning a crafty falsification? . . . Writers in time transfer the mendacity of their craft to other areas of their lives." The craft of Toomey's narrative—of this novel—lies in its coherence; vast and sprawling as it is, it sweeps powerfully onwards, though 648 pages, tempting the reader sometimes into a passivity which is ill-advised: let the attention lapse and you will have been overtaken by the narrative energy. It does indeed tell a story.

RITES OF PASSAGE[2] follows close upon the heels of *Darkness Visible*, William Golding's first novel after a long silence. On the face of it, they are so different as to make it well-nigh incredible that they should come from the same hand. *Darkness Visible* is a contemporary narrative ranging from an unforgettable opening on the Isle of Dogs during the London blitz to a boys' prep school to a com-fortable home counties town to Australia, and ending with a drama of terrorism and attempted kidnapping. *Rites of Passage* is—technically, at any rate—an historical novel, set in a crumbling British naval vessel loaded with passengers and emigrants and bound for Australia at some un-specified point which seems to be around 1810. And yet that is the only sense in which it can be labelled historical; like every work of Golding's it is a fable, a parable, an elaborate symbolic statement—and here the dissimilarity from its predecessor ends: both are an investigation of the manifestations of evil. *Darkness Visible* is about public evil as wielded by the warped girl twins who are the book's central figures. *Rites of Passage* is about private evil, the ways in which we can persecute one another and drive one another to madness and, in the event, death. The violences in *Darkness Visible* are physical; *Rites of Passage* ends with a death, and the death is classifiable as murder, but the violence has been the mental violence of humiliation.

[2] *Rites of Passage*. By WILLIAM GOLDING. Faber & Faber, £5.95.

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It must be said that *Rites of Passage* is not an easy book. For the perception of its layers of meaning, its references—erudition would be a better word—its symbolisms, a single reading will not do. Of all William Golding's fictional puzzles—and there is a sense in which each one of his novels is a *roman à clef*—this seems to me the most complex and at times the most elusive: it is not altogether an easy passage for the reader. And yet there is plenty that is superficially enjoyable: the strength of the prose, the elegance of the evocation of early 19th-century nautical life and the stylistic ingenuities, the humour and the dark narrative insistence on mysteries as yet unfolded. But for a fuller comprehension you must reread, reconsider, reflect. Only then does the subtlety of the book become clearer—and even then there are elusive points that nag long after one has finished reading.

I still do not understand why the ship is unnamed, but the absent name is clearly of significance since it is twice referred to, once to say that a child born on board has been named after the ship, to which the comment is "Poor, poor child! . . ." Names, or ambivalence in naming, are of significance to William Golding; he teased his readers in the same way in *Darkness Visible*, where Matty, the strange apocalyptic hero, is given a surname that is a little altered each time it is mentioned: a point differently interpreted in every review I read (or at least all those stout-hearted enough to tackle the matter), with occasionally hilarious results.

Rites of Passage has two heroes, and it is the apposition of these two men that gives the book its point and purpose. The narrator, Edward Talbot, is a young complacent aristocrat on his way to a post in the entourage of the governor, and the narration takes the form of his letter to the influential godfather and patron who has secured him the position. The anti-hero is an oafish (in Talbot's eyes) and inadequate young parson called Colley, and the book's reversal and dénouement is the parallel letter of Colley to his sister, in which we learn the man's true nature and the truth of the bizarre central episode in which Colley is forced by the seamen to take part in the Crossing the Line ritual, made drunk and—in fact—forced to commit a homosexual act the shame of which literally kills him. The narrative is complicated and folds back upon itself, an intricate construction which can occasionally, without close attention, become confusing.

The ship is a microcosm of the society of the time: gentry at one end, low-class emigrants at the other, officers segregated from men. The attitudes and mannerisms of caste are superbly rendered: the ritual and tradition of the navy, the smug classical culture of Talbot, the ludicrous pretensions of Brocklebank the painter, the sexual rapacity and deception of his "daughter" Zenobia. There are some fine set-piece scenes: Talbot's frenzied

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copulation with Zenobia in the awkward confines of his cabin. Brocklebank's description of a vain client ("Could you not dash me in there, Brocklebank? I distinctly remember standin' just by the broken rail, encouragin' the crew and indicatin' the enemy by wavin' me sword towards them"). And the whole claustrophobic, creaking, stinking, formalised world of the ship is vividly presented in a language that never falters in its adherence to period and to caste of mind. But, when all is said and done, this latest novel of Golding's remains for me more of a *tour de force* to be admired and respected than a visionary masterpiece like *The Spire* or *The Inheritors*. None the less, one feels it was very properly awarded the Booker Prize.

THE FASHIONABLE LITERARY taste of the 1980s, I keep reading, is for the novel of wit, concision, brevity. The two names most likely to be handed around as providing such a dish are those of Barbara Pym and Penelope Fitzgerald. Barbara Pym was sixty-three when she died at the beginning of 1980, and Mrs Fitzgerald has also reached an age of discretion (I hope she won't take such an observation amiss; I feel sure Barbara Pym would not have done). It is with a certain satisfaction that one notes that if a fashion is being thrust—or insinuated—upon us it is not by youths and striplings. Penelope Fitzgerald's latest book, *Human Voices*,[3] makes use of her experiences in the BBC during the war to give us another exercise in the fiction of economy and understatement. It is a very English kind of writing, backing away from emotional and stylistic excess; if one had to suggest a literary antithesis I suppose it would be Lawrence Durrell. For my part, give me Mrs Fitzgerald every time. Or Miss Pym.

Penelope Fitzgerald brings off her effects through neat dialogue and a deft hand with the descriptive phrase that nails a place or situation in a way that pages of painstaking description would have failed to do; the BBC as a "cross between a civil service, a powerful moral force, and an amateur theatrical company that wasn't too sure where next week's money was coming from . . .", a baby "that breathed gently, as though simmering", the BBC's labelling system—"Air Raid Siren, False Alarm: Cheerful Voices with Chink of Tea-cups: Polish Refugees in Scotland, National Singing, no Translation." The atmosphere of the place is beautifully conveyed; the custom of referring to everyone by a system of occupational initials—RPD, RPA, DPP—"the frightful clash of metal trays" in the canteen, the mixture of hierarchy and amateurish confusion. Anyone who has been into Broadcasting House in recent years can note that that element of makeshift is surviving nicely: I was once entranced to observe the flex of a microphone swathed in the same fraying black insulation tape that covers one's own domestic appliances.

There is not a great deal of plot; a French girl has an illegitimate baby in the concert hall of the BBC which has been turned into overnight sleeping accommodation for the staff, another junior employee falls in love with her boss, a French general is cut off in the middle of a potentially disastrous broadcast, an American journalist reports on wartime London. It is not so much a narrative as a series of sparkling episodes; the continuity is provided by the characters—Brooks, the preoccupied egotistical Director of Recorded Programmes whose technical know-how makes him indispensable, the cynical detached DPP, poor pregnant Lise, the earnest junior, Willy, sensible Annie from Birmingham. The interplay between them is, among many other things, a clever fictional rendering of the way in which a random selection of people, flung together for impersonal reasons, will set up a pattern of relationships and reactions, just like iron filings.

Penelope Fitzgerald has deliberately set her book within confines; Lise, Brooks, DPP and the rest stray beyond the building itself (strikingly likened to a liner: "At night, with all its blazing portholes blacked out, it towered over a flotilla of taxis, each dropping off a speaker or two"); but they are nevertheless tethered to the place, manipulated by the requirements of the microphones and the "aluminium discs coated on one side with acetate whose pungent rankness was the true smell of the BBC's war." Within those confines she achieves a remarkable range of comment about how people behave, told in a voice that is both idiosyncratic and memorable. It is an unpretentious and thoroughly enjoyable novel.

MOVING FROM Penelope Fitzgerald's sparse and accurate prose to the lush pastures of the 505 pages of *Nuns and Soldiers*[4] the reader suffers from a mild cultural shock. Here, people are "terribly, terribly in love"; they "moan and moan with joy", they weep and howl and have visions and rush naked into the sea. Above all—and this is where one nods appreciatively at the adaptability of the novel as a literary form: we are told everything about them, nothing is held back, we are given their every word, their every thought, their backgrounds are upholstered for page after page, nothing is left to chance—or to the reader. And let it be said that this makes for a thundering good read. There is no

[3] *Human Voices*. By PENELOPE FITZGERALD. Collins, £5.25.

[4] *Nuns and Soldiers*. By IRIS MURDOCH. Chatto & Windus, £6.50.

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question of putting the book down: you have got to see what happens, how it will all work out, who will end up with whom, how the lies and deceptions will be resolved. And if there is not the appreciative glow set up by stylistic felicities—well, instead you have the experience of total immersion in the bizarre operatic world that only Iris Murdoch can create.

Warm, impulsive, fortyish Gertrude is exhorted by her husband Guy, on his death-bed, to re-marry. She does—but not the anguished withdrawn Polish refugee, the Count, who has secretly loved her for years. Instead she takes up with a raffish layabout painter, Tim, leaves him, reunites with him, marries him, leaves him again, is reunited. . . . The Count is loved by Anne, Gertrude's old Cambridge friend, recently emerged from a nunnery. Tim has a long-term sexual and emotional arrangement with an equally tawdry girl, Daisy. Everyone deceives everyone else (or nearly everyone else). Tim and Daisy live on National Assistance; Gertrude is cushioned by her husband's money. No work is done by anyone, or not seen to be done: Tim paints a bit in the South of France; the Count, a civil servant, goes to his office but his heart is not in what he is doing. The world of public events does not impinge at all, except in the long (and effective) descriptions of the Count's feelings about his homeland. Emotional life is absolute; even the Greek chorus of minor characters who surround the four or five central figures does nothing but comment on the state of affairs between Gertrude and Tim, speculate on what will happen, interfere.

The impression given—and intended, one presumes—is that one is reading a charade rather than a reflection of life itself. Characters are always in a state of exaltation or despair, a landscape of emotional excess that omits all the dailyness of life, any level plane of feeling. And of course up to a point this is realistic; we are concerned for the most part with people in love, and being in love does have that tendency to isolate the sufferer. But these sufferers grab their condition with both hands, wallow in it; again, the operatic analogy suggests itself—their reflections are not the reflections of real people but arias, cries of anguish or exaltation, exaggerated bouts of accusation or self-laceration. "She had a new consciousness, her whole being hummed with a sacred love-awareness. She loved Tim with passion, with tenderness, with laughter and tears, with all the accumulated *intelligent* forces of her being. . . ." "Gertrude unbuttoned her dress and tore at it. She grasped her hair and pulled. Her mouth opened in a grin of pain and rage, tears like thunder-drops rained from her eyes. She sat down and remained absolutely still for nearly half an hour."

There are the expected Murdochian scenes of

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trial by physical ordeal—in this instance trial by water, twice. Anne plunges into the North Sea wearing nothing but the cross on a chain around her neck, and narrowly survives drowning. Tim, at large in the Provençal landscape in a state of maniacal grief, jumps into a canal to save a dog and is swept down into a subterranean channel, also to escape by what seems a miracle. There are compendious conversations and spiritual distress. Anne experiences a vision of Jesus which is baffling in its effect; at points it seems a sexual fantasy, at others it is downright hilarious (" 'I had a pleasant life until the end. The Sea of Galilee is one of the most beautiful places in the world. Have you been there?' 'Thou knowest, Sir,' said Anne, 'that I have not visited Israel' ").

The theme of deception recurs throughout: lies of commission, lies of omission. People lie to each other and to themselves. There is a resolution and an ending that is as happy as any could be under the circumstances. And the reader, having reached it, is impressed by the creative vigour that can sustain such powerful fantasy for so long and to such effect.

THE FIRST THING to be said about Russell Hoban's apocalyptic fable is that it is compulsive reading.[5] From the first words ("On my naming day when I come 12 I to gone front spear and kilt a wyld boar he parbly ben the las wyld boar on the Bundel Downs any how there hadnt ben none for a long time befor him nor I aint looking to see none agen") you are immersed in a world that is total, maverick and disturbing—so much so that at times I was obliged to set the book aside and turn to some tried familiar favourite for assurance both literary and otherwise. It is strong stuff—and ambitious stuff, too: Russell Hoban is considering human nature, no less, and is not optimistic, to put it gently.

We are in south-east England, in the year 2347 o.c. (Our Count); in other words two thousand three hundred and forty seven years after the nuclear holocaust, plus an unspecified number of years during which no one was in a fit state to start counting again. " . . .A.D. 120 thats the year count they use to have it gone from year 1 right the way to Bad Time. A.D. means All Done. . . ." The present inhabitants live in what sounds like a late Iron Age culture in a landscape roamed by packs of killer dogs, who are nevertheless repositories of a mysterious and perhaps the ultimate salutary wisdom, and the visible and vaguely interpreted reminders of what has been: the bombed towns, the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral ("The wood in the stoan and the stoan in the wood. The idear in the hart of everything"), the foliate mask on a surviving capital.

Now if there are two ingredients that would normally have me throw a book across the room after the second page they are future prediction and authorial messing around with language. Jabberwocky, to my mind, is of no literary interest whatsoever; and the novelist's concern is the human condition not prophecy (or historical reconstruction, for that matter, though best not to get involved in that argument, I suppose. . .). But the language of *Riddley Walker* is not Jabberwocky: it is a craftsmanlike shunt and twist of standard English which contrives at times a startling poetic power of its own and which is essential to the book's purposes in showing how memory itself is enshrined in speech, even distant and uncomprehended memory. The ghostly presence of organised society and technology survives in the decayed speech of these inhabitants of Inland: Mincery men, the Pry Mincer, Ardship of Cambry, the Loakel Tharty, many cools and party cools, serkits overloadit, vansit theary. And the matter of the book—for all its chilling supposition—is the human mind, its terrible and perhaps fatal duality, its capacity for salvation, its energy, its tragedy—". . . that thing with no name looking out through our eye hoals."

They are mystical and credulous, these people. They have an oral religious myth which is preserved and re-enacted by travelling puppeteers and which is derived—distantly—from the legend of St Eustace, itself apparently Russell Hoban's inspiration for the book. The enactment of the "Eusa Story" and the associated Punch and Judy dialogues show the author's extraordinary and maverick imaginative powers at their fullest stretch, it seem to me, since *The Mouse and his Child* (the great children's book of the century, surely). Brilliant, allusive, disturbing, they interrupt the tempo of the narrative just sufficiently for the cryptic references and jingles to haunt the reader: Mr Clevver, the Littl Shynin Man, "Horny Boy rung Widders Bel, Stoal his Fathers Ham as Wel, Bernt his Arse and Forkt a Stoan. . . ." Riddley Walker, perplexed but perceptive and resourceful holder of inherited powers of "connexion"—which I take to be artistic insight as opposed to the seer-like capacities of the puppeteers—runs away from his "crowd", in mysterious communion with one of the dog packs, and teams up with "the Lissener", a prophetic and persecuted child, one of the Eusa people, mutants bred, segregated and sacrificed as perpetual reminders of "the white shadder." There is flight and pursuit, search and loss, question and answer. There is cruelty and superstition ("Col iron in that look and heads on poals") and the sad dim awareness that the world once was otherwise and that there may be an inescapable cycle of things:

[5] *Riddley Walker.* By RUSSELL HOBAN. Jonathan Cape, £5.95.

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"O what we ben! And what we come to! . . . Im crying for what ben Im crying for what going to be." No review can do more than suggest the range and effect of this extraordinary book.

IT IS *sui generis*, its inspirations both particular and diverse, its references legion, its craft remarkable—contributing to a whole that is vivid, compelling and certainly unforgettable. No one should be put off by the language. Take it phonetically—hear the book rather than read it—and there is no problem; indeed, and extraordinarily, it carries a powerful resonance of its own so that phrases and passages remain in the mind long after the book is put down. "A stoan wood unner the groun the hart of the wood in the hart of the stoan in the woom of her what has her woom in Cambry", "Stoan boans and iron tits and teef be twean her legs." Comparisons are going to be made: Tolkien, even (heaven help us) Richard Adams. The construction of special worlds carries the risk of consignment to a kind of literary graveyard. I hope this book gets the respect and attention it deserves.

Beyond the Country-House Circuit

English Lives & Times—By MAX BELOFF

THE SOCIAL ROLE of the English "public" schools and of the ancient Universities is again exciting political controversy. The Labour Party's spokesman on education, Neil Kinnock MP (Lewis School, Pengam, and University College, Cardiff), has declared war on both, not because of their educational excellence, but because they represent a conspiracy on the part of a ruling élite to transmit political and social power from one generation to the next in an undemocratic fashion. Parents who choose to spend their money on obtaining education for their children outside the State system do so, in Mr Kinnock's view, not because they are dissatisfied with the State system (which, after all, produced Mr Kinnock) but because they seek for them illegitimate advantages in later life, including a better chance of entry to Oxford or Cambridge.

In expounding these views and in proposing legislation intended to destroy any alternatives to the State system, Mr Kinnock is not alone. At his side stand the formidable figures of Anthony Wedgwood Benn (self-styled Tony Benn; *ci-devant* second Viscount Stansgate: Westminster and New College) and his American wife who has made it her business to force upon the British scene those aspects of educational provision in her native land which Americans themselves are increasingly calling into question. In the meantime, it has become a criterion of respectability for a Labour MP or would-be MP to make certain that his or her children are taught wholly within the State system, and there in a comprehensive not a selective school.

These attitudes in part reflect the change that has come over the Labour Party itself. From its pristine devotion to the cause of the poor and the oppressed and to the belief that the remedies for poverty and its evils would be found in "a new economic order", the Party has progressed to a view where its prime motive force has nothing to do with social justice or human compassion but is the much simpler one of envy—envy not merely of material possessions but of better education, wider culture, social recognition. One has only to listen to Mr Kinnock talk about education or read what he writes to feel the absence of any concern for the subject itself and the presence instead of deep underlying and genuine sentiments of hatred for those who take a different view of its role. The prevalence of attitudes of this kind (which are very similar to those of Robespierre in his day) is closely connected with the decline in the number of Members of Parliament on the Labour side with a background in manual occupations and the plethora of members of the scribbling professions—provincial lecturers, teachers, journalists, media-men: the *lumpen-proletariat* of academe and literature.

It is worth reflecting that on present-day criteria Clement Attlee (Haileybury and University College) and Hugh Dalton (Eton and King's) would not have been able to represent over long periods thoroughly working-class constituencies or to occupy the offices of Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

IT WOULD, nevertheless, be absurd to go to the other extreme and suggest that the existence of an educational system outside and pre-dating the State's provision has had no impact on modern British history or that the effects of such education have been without significance in moulding characters and attitudes. It is clear that what emerges from similar educational experience may be very varied and that many other factors, particularly those of family, must be taken into account.

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Four recent works of a biographical nature incline one to this reflection since they deal with four figures of some consequence to British political and intellectual life over the last hundred years. Arthur Balfour (Eton and Trinity, Cambridge); George Macaulay Trevelyan (Harrow and Trinity, Cambridge); Raymond Asquith (Winchester and Balliol); Douglas Jay (Winchester and New College)—both the latter having gone on to be Fellows of All Souls. All three major political parties are represented in this group—although Raymond Asquith's death in World War I prevented him from contesting the Parliamentary seat for which he had been adopted, while Trevelyan at a relatively early age decided that the writing of history rather than practical politics represented for him the best way of furthering his Liberal ideals.

As individuals they could scarcely differ more; nor is there anything to suggest a common outlook between any of them and those who directly shared their experience of school of college. It is true that the bias of their education was humanist and philosophical and not scientific in the modern sense; and it may be that a common respect for humane studies and for language as an accurate instrument has been of some importance in relation to public life in this country, and neglect of scientific studies one of its weaknesses. But these are matters upon which a few random examples are not likely to throw much light. Again, it is obvious that personal contacts will on the whole be easier between those who have shared the formative experiences of early life—it is then that people make friends, rarely later. But rather than point to "conspiracy" should we not ask whether any society can function for long without a social cement? Would France have been stronger without the *Ecole Normale* and the *Ecole Polytechnique*? Is not the alternative to these forms of social cement the totalitarian party for which the alienated souls of the Kinnocks and the Benns so clearly crave?

It is not merely that sentiments of this kind prevent serious attention to admitted weaknesses in Britain's educational provisions but that they seriously impede the study of British government itself. Thus a work on the Civil Service by Lord Crowther-Hunt (Bellevue High School, Bradford, and Sidney Sussex) and Peter Kellner (Royal Grammar School, Newcastle, and King's)[1] deals with many important issues, including the undoubted extent to which the Civil Service itself prevented the proper implementation of the Fulton reforms and is able to frustrate and denature other Government policies which do not fit in to its own ways of thinking while maintaining a control of information which makes it excessively difficult for Parliament itself to know what is going on. It is a well-documented and serious work, which is understandable since Lord Crowther-Hunt has himself occupied ministerial and advisory posts and is now a professional teacher of politics (at Oxford).

YET THE AUTHORS are constantly diverted from the reasons for this situation in the constitutional and legal structure, and (as is perhaps natural for two committed supporters of the Labour Party) seriously underplay the obstacles to reform inherent in the growth of trade-unionism in the public service in favour of the demonology of the service's alleged bias in favour of "Oxbridge" and the public schools. Every country has a different criterion for senior posts in the civil service. This, in turn, will make some avenues to entry more common than others. It is not, however, the common origin of the civil servants but their moulding into a single body over a lifetime's service and the acquisition of powerful instincts of self-preservation that gives them their strength. The first head of the Civil Service College, whose rapid slide from the intentions of the Fulton Committee is well set out, was chosen by the Oxbridge mandarins though he himself was what Crowther-Hunt and Kellner particularly approve of—a non-public-

[1] *The Civil Servants: An Inquiry into Britain's Ruling Class*. By PETER KELLNER and LORD CROWTHER-HUNT. Macdonald, £9.95.

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school social scientist from a provincial University. It does not seem to have helped. We still have no *Ecole Nationale d'Administration*, if that indeed is what we require.

WHENEVER ONE FINDS a scapegoat theory of economic and political failure it is well to be on one's guard—witches, capitalists, Jews, the products of the Public Schools and Oxbridge—the explanations may differ but the obstacles to analysis remain. Unfortunately in this case the only gainers will be the obscurantists of the civil service who can but rejoice as they see their critics scrambling happily along false trails.

ARTHUR BALFOUR remains an enigmatic figure whose personality and beliefs have defied a number of biographers. Max Egremont, whose book[2] is the first to use the important papers of Balfour's secretary Sandars, has produced a well-written and credible portrait but on too modest a scale to satisfy the historian's needs. What he does best is depicting the social and intellectual atmosphere within which the young Balfour moved. It is a world which had already largely vanished while Balfour was still active in politics; he had held office first after Gladstone's defeat in 1885; he left it for the last time when Ramsay MacDonald won the election of 1929. By that time the division even on the Conservative side between "society", the world of the intellect, and party politics was almost complete. The philosophical interests of Balfour were as unlikely to figure in the armoury of a potential Prime Minister as the scientific interests of his uncle, Lord Salisbury, or the theological minutiae which preoccupied his Cecil cousins. The curiously ambivalent relationships between individual members of the "Souls" (Balfour's friendship with Lady Elcho, which Lord Egremont is content not to probe too far, is an extreme example) would seem very peculiar in an intellectual world practising the mores of Bloomsbury. From the great country houses to cocoa and buns! And Bloomsbury did not produce a Prime Minister.

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[2] *Balfour*. By MAX EGREMONT. Collins, £12.95.

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inescapable servitude of the true professional politician. His removal from the party leadership in 1911 is told too briefly to make the most of the new material available, but Balfour clearly felt that if the price of leadership was putting up with one's followers, the price could be too high.

Of what might be called Balfour's second career, beginning with his entry into the 1915 coalition Lord Egremont takes less notice; the things with which Balfour was concerned—the replacing of Asquith by Lloyd George, the navy, the encouragement of science, peace-making, imperial affairs, his curiously unexpected enthusiasm for Zionism—are duly chronicled but without enthusiasm. Lord Egremont clearly feels that British politics and society are much less interesting after 1914 than before that crucial date; he may well be right.

BY CONTRAST WITH Balfour, whose career spanned so long an era, Raymond Asquith is perforce remembered as one of the generation sacrificed in the First World War and deprived of fulfilling his promise of service to the community. It is the generation of which Harold Macmillan has made himself the remembrancer and advocate. Yet on the evidence of the Letters and of John Jolliffe's discreet editorial apparatus[3]—it is scarcely a biography—it is hard to believe that in this particular case Britain lost a potential leader. The evidence that Asquith gave of leadership was his reluctance to be separated from the fate of his generation and his insistence on front line service with the extreme likelihood of death in action rather than the staff position which was open to him. Yet by the age of 37 the eldest son of a Prime Minister of that era might have been expected to have already had his feet well up the ladder of success in public life, if such had been his destiny. Churchill at the same age had been in the Cabinet for four years, while Asquith's career at the bar—his rather reluctantly chosen profession—had been distinguished but by no means outstanding.

This does not mean that the letters themselves are of no historical interest. They do not suggest that the education provided at Winchester and Balliol was either narrow or formal, or that someone whose scholarly record was as distinguished as was Asquith's had not acquired something of permanent value for himself and his friends. What they do reveal is that, in default of some deep ideological commitment to replace the Victorian religious inspiration, Edwardian society had dangers and temptations to which the fortunate might all too easily succumb. Not the obvious ones of "women and champagne"—if Asquith occasionally drank too much, his fidelity to his chosen bride through the long engagement imposed upon them by his lack of money was exemplary; and Mr Jolliffe as his grandson can be pardoned for dwelling on the obvious happiness of his all-too-few years of married life. The temptations were different.

One already alluded to is the too easy acceptance of a conventional attitude to the role of money. The Prime Minister was never a rich man. Asquith's step-mother, the redoubtable Margot, brought some money into the family, but it is hard to see why a young man with so many talents should have regarded it as either his father's or his step-mother's business to provide for the way of life he chose to embrace, or indeed why with a profession in which he was unlikely to starve he should have accepted the veto on marriage imposed by his loved one's parents. The second temptation was the wasting of time in early adult life. Freed from the domestic chores which assail all but the most fortunate of young professional men today, there should have been plenty of time to travel, to pursue further learning, or to promote public causes. Yet what we find is the dreary round of formal social life, of field sports and bridge, of endless peregrinations from one country house to the next. It was an insular world with its own conventions in which fine wines and good cooking seemed much more important than the great scientific and cultural revolutions going on in contemporary Europe.

Mr Jolliffe is, of course, right to point out that many of Asquith's prejudices that suddenly shock one in the Letters—anti-Semitism, sentiments of racial superiority, an incapacity even at the University to make contact with those who did not share his own social background—are faults of the age and should not be held against Asquith personally. To some extent they are also balanced by a frankness on some matters where later generations prefer sentiment. He clearly disliked Jews and Paulines—mainly, it would seem, for working too hard. As a Jewish Pauline, I am perhaps not to be blamed for finding Raymond Asquith a very unsympathetic character.

[3] *Raymond Asquith: Life and Letters*. By JOHN JOLLIFFE. Collins, £10.95.

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THAT NONE OF THIS was necessary, even for the son of a Liberal statesman, is borne out by Mary Moorman's delightful if rather slight biography of her father, George Macaulay Trevelyan.[4] An almost exact contemporary of Raymond Asquith's—he was about two years his senior—Trevelyan showed that the evangelical strain of English reform was a living thing even when the doctrinal foundations had weakened, and that wealth could be seen as a means for freeing one to do good. Less distinguished than Asquith at school or University, Trevelyan developed much sooner into a responsible adult. To study and teach English history, to bring its message of achievement and promise to broader strata of society, and to preserve and cherish the landscape and artifacts which recorded that history, was a life's work worthy of a man.

Yet this intense feeling for his own country was in Trevelyan's case no bar to wider sympathies—the history of other countries, above all of the Italian *Risorgimento*, was equally capable of imparting inspiration, and the writing of history was never an excuse for reluctance to participate in its making. Mrs Moorman devotes much of her book to a description of Trevelyan's work with an ambulance unit on the Italian front in the War—when his weak eyesight had prevented more conventional military service. It is a story both of great courage and of the way in which unexpected practical skills can be developed in very unlikely quarters. It is easy to see why Trevelyan was a Liberal, and why he did not follow his elder brother Charles into the socialist camp. Raymond Asquith's letters suggest no particular sympathy with the Liberal tenets of the day, only a choice of party that came naturally to one of his parentage. Nor can we make too much of the much longer life that Trevelyan enjoyed; if he had been the victim of an Austrian bullet, we would still have had the *Risorgimento* trilogy, the lives of John Bright and of Grey of the Reform Bill, with other lesser works. As a companion and as a writer of witty letters Raymond Asquith clearly outshone Trevelyan. But if one looks for the constructive side of Edwardian Britain one must seek it with Trevelyan and his friends and not with the gilded youth of the country-house circuit.

DOUGLAS JAY's memoirs[5] are both absorbing in themselves and an important contribution to the history of our times. His accounts of the 1930s and of "Appeasement" (he provides a useful

[4] *George Macaulay Trevelyan: A Memoir*. By MARY MOORMAN. Hamish Hamilton, £9.95.

[5] *Change and Fortune: A Political Record*. By DOUGLAS JAY. Hutchinson, £16.

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balance to A. L. Rowse's *All Souls and Appeasement*), of the War effort as seen from the point of view of a civil servant, and of the Attlee and Wilson governments in which he served are both important in what they record and illustrate, and very effectively written where personalities are depicted.[6] On the whole Jay is a kindly man and few do too badly, though neither Harold Wilson nor his school and New College contemporary Dick Crossman come out altogether unscathed. It does not appear that Jay has any hates except for the French—and even here he cannot forbear expressing something near admiration for their ruthless pursuit of national advantage which, as a strong British patriot (not to say nationalist), Jay would rather like to see us emulate.

It has been held against this work that Mr Jay spends too much time retailing his well-known criticisms of British membership of the Common Market—criticisms which one must admit are much harder to reject after our experience of membership than when they were first uttered as warnings against joining. I do not find this to be the case. It is the first record from the inside of the anti-Common Market campaign within the Labour government, within the Labour Party and in the country. Since the story is almost certainly an unfinished one, it is valuable to have all this so clearly presented. Douglas Jay is now in his last Parliament and is a Labour M.P. of a kind that is growing rarer (and that Neil Kinnock and Tony Benn would like to see disappear altogether). Despite a reference to the possibility that some of our lack of productivity is due to an over-concentration on the humanities in the educational system, he shows no remorse for the education he himself received at Winchester and Oxford. Indeed he shows a decent paternal pride in his own sons' academic achievements in the same conventional setting. His defence of All Souls will also hardly gladden Mr Kinnock's heart:

> To any young fellow in his early twenties the time, facilities and contacts were so obviously precious that my generation, as I remember those years, were actively conscious of the obligation to use them fully and preserve the traditional standards. Was this a justifiable and valuable institution, or a system of meritocracy? Half a century later, in a world of falling or at least uncertain standards, I would defend it with much greater conviction than in the Oxford of the 1930's.

In feeling an obligation to public service as the counterpart of privilege, Jay resembles the young Trevelyan of a generation earlier. His own parents were Conservatives but devoted to various forms of service to the community. Although wealthy when Jay was a child, they seem to have become hard-up by middle-class standards; and to send a son to University involved some sacrifice. It would have seemed unreasonable to suggest that it was an occasion for self-indulgence. Jay's own socialism is untouched either by traditional Marxism or by a spurious self-identification with the working class. He is too much of an economist to take the view that any form of economic progress is obtainable if trade unions use their power to push up money wages without regard to the consequences for anyone else. His socialism remains as it began—a

[6] Mr Jay occasionally falls into the trap not uncommon among writers of memoirs—relying on his memory or on some single source, and not checking what he wishes to say against the work of professional historians. Thus, as a number of historians have shown, it is quite incorrect to say that the famous East Fulham by-election was won by John Wilmot on a platform of "collective security." Wilmot's conversion to Douglas Jay's own strongly anti-appeasement attitudes was subsequent to the by-election; in so far as foreign policy was an issue, Wilmot's own platform was vaguely "pacifist."

Again, no historian who had studied the abundant documentation on the American side has been prepared to accept the view given currency in Lord Avon's memoirs that the famous "offer" by Roosevelt to Chamberlain in January 1938 was intended to involve the United States in the defence of the political status quo in Europe or to end in a "grand alliance" against Nazism. It is possible to criticise Chamberlain's handling of the incident but not to treat it as a turning-point on the road to War and near-defeat.

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conviction that poverty can be remedied within a democratic system through fiscal redistribution and that the production of wealth (though not its allocation within the community) is best left to private enterprise. Even the "Multinationals" who figure so prominently in the modern socialist's demonology do not come out too badly. Jay notes that during his period at the Board of Trade it was the multinationals which brought employment to Scotland, not any initiative on the part of the Scots. He is as frosty about devolution as about the EEC.

One can easily see why, for Douglas Jay, the premature and sudden death of Hugh Gaitskell (and in lesser and different ways the almost simultaneous loss of John Strachey and of Aneurin Bevan) represents the real turning-point in the fortunes of the Labour Party and of post-War Britain. Jay's memoirs are perhaps the last authentic utterance of British social democracy.

ONE PROBLEM that the British did not solve during the period covered by these biographical works was that of Ireland. And it is worth calling attention to the explanation offered by the most eminent of Irish historians, the Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, the Oxbridge of Ireland.[7] What Dr Lyons offers in his "Ford Lectures" is the view that while political solutions have been and will be sought, the obstacles in their way derive from the central fact about the situation "which is the collision of a variety of cultures within an island whose very smallness makes their juxtaposition potentially and often actually lethal." Dr Lyons shows both great learning and great skill in disentangling the threads provided by conquest and occupation, race and language, and religion which go to make up the Irish tapestry. His main interest—and the book will whet one's appetite for the promised life of Yeats on which Dr Lyons has been engaged—is in the cultural revival in Ireland at the turn of the century which saw both the revival of interest in the original language and the flowering of an Irish literature in English. As he shows, what made it difficult to bring this movement to full fruition and to establish a national culture that could stand four-square on its own was that every cultural initiative was thought of in terms of its political implications. No wonder that Englishmen familiar with the idea of "class" as the supreme determinant of political allegiance find their footsteps faltering when it comes to dealing with Irish matters and that external observers are even more baffled. While in England (and even in Scotland) it is generally accepted that economic conditions play a major part in the ordinary citizen's perceptions of politics, Irishmen seemed prepared (at any rate in Ulster) to destroy livelihoods for motives that are not economic at all.

Nothing is more important for an historian or for a statesman than properly to assess the role of culture. I wish Mr Menachem Begin could find time to read this book; he might learn that the problems of Israel are not unique.

[7] *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890–1939.* By F. S. L. LYONS. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £6.95.

December Evensong

The bookseller locks up his shop
and whistles his bicycle into the slush.
Radetzkies into the Sisley mist.

Freely contracted to a generous bondage
we make our way to church,
aware that our feet and hearts are too cold.

The butcher unhooks his last rabbit.
Our watch-with-mother greetings smile
from face to face and fade.

The moon is a dull Victoria sixpence.
Kicking up the snow,
carol-singers jingle tins from house to house.

Michael Hulse

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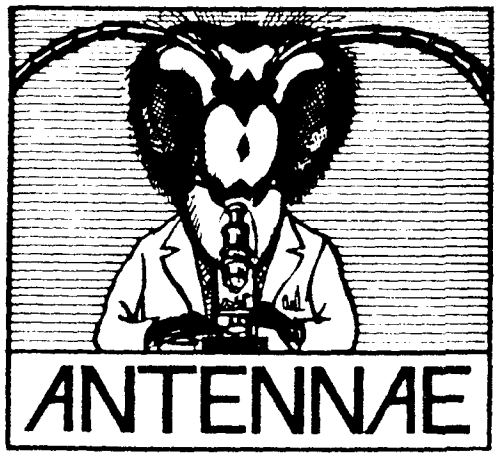

Between Old Physics & New Reality

By Bernard d'Espagnat

CERTAIN SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATIONS unavoidably lead to questions about science itself, and this is particularly true in the case of modern physics. The considerable advances physics has made within this century are of a completely "normal" scientific type: essentially they have vastly expanded our ability to interrelate, by means of elegant and compact mathematics, the observational data in many fields. But for this a price had to be paid: the new general laws and principles thus introduced turned out not to be expressible in the good old terms of familiar concepts. And experience has shown that once we start to abandon the guidance of such concepts we soon find ourselves facing hard epistemological questions: "What is it that science actually deals with, or should deal with?", and the like.

It is quite remarkable that basic problems of that kind could have been avoided for so long. In a sense it is also quite fortunate. All conceptual problems are difficult and even basic questions that do not directly involve epistemology must often wait many years for an answer. It is clear, for example, that physicists like Volta and Ampère could not have discovered the fundamental laws governing the effects of electric currents if knowledge of "what electricity consists of" (electrons) had been a prerequisite. In a way, the discovery that it is possible to speak meaningfully (even correctly!) about things that are not *basically* known was the very key—unknown to the medieval philosophers—to such scientific successes.

This presumably accounts for the fact that during the whole of the 19th century physicists could develop their various queries unhindered by the necessity of pondering the deeper meaning of what they found. On the whole they shared a rather simple view of such questions. They believed they were contemplating the Great Machinery of the World and were engaged in elucidating bit by bit the way in which it works, by looking at its various parts. As their knowledge increased the picture they obtained grew progressively more detailed and more accurate. From time to time, admittedly, they were surprised to discover entities that do not directly act upon our senses, and had, for that reason, until then remained unknown. But all these findings somehow fitted into the established framework of a consistent set of primitive concepts which were considered to be "obvious truths."

Epistemology certainly existed at that time. But it is not unfair to say that it was essentially directed either at a comparison of various methodologies or at a study of problems that were more inspired by science than essential to its understanding.

CONTRARY TO COMMON BELIEF, the change that arose in that situation at the beginning of the 20th century was not mainly due to the advent of Relativity Theory. The "relativistic" idea of the merging of space and time into a single continuum was, of course, the first blow. But the development of the atomic theory created a situation that called

THIS *is one of a series of columns planned by* ARTHUR KOESTLER, *for which he acts as editorial adviser; his article "Horizons in Space" inaugurated the series in the October 1979 issue. It seems that "the new frontier" lies not between the sciences and the humanities, but on the peripheries of contemporary science itself. This department is mainly concerned with those border areas, from cosmology to psychology, which are of special relevance to both cultures.*

BERNARD D'ESPAGNAT, *son of the post-impressionist painter Georges d'Espagnat, is a theoretical physicist whose interests lie mainly in elementary particle physics and in the foundations of quantum mechanics. He helped to create the theory division of* CERN *(European Organisation for Nuclear Research) in Geneva, and is now a professor at the Université de Paris-Sud Orsay. Apart from his many scientific articles, he has published three books: "Conception de la Physique Contemporaine" (Hermann, 1964; awarded the Lecomte du Noüy prize), "Conceptual Foundations of Quantum Mechanics" (Addison-Wesley-Benjamin, 1971, n.e. 1976), and "A La Recherche du Réel" (Gauthiers-Villars, 1979).*

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for a far more drastic revision of all our familiar concepts. As it ultimately turned out, it was not merely our usual ways of describing the external world that were at stake but our very conception of the *existence* of a fully describable outside world.

A WORD ABOUT the well-known historical circumstances. For a long time experimental data about the composition of the light emitted by the atoms of incandescent substances (the so-called atomic spectra) had continued to accumulate without anyone being able to give a really satisfactory explanation of it. Eventually, during the 1920s, due to the efforts of Louis de Broglie, Erwin Schrödinger, Werner Heisenberg, Paul Dirac and a few other theorists, there emerged a mathematical formalism, known as Quantum Mechanics, which made it possible to calculate the exact structure of all the spectra already known, and to predict correctly those that were not known. I say "formalism", and not "theory", because the hard core of Quantum Mechanics differs from all the old physical theories. Not that it is less general, or less mathematical. On the contrary, it has a more general bearing than any of them (nowadays it applies to practically the whole of physics, of chemistry, and of astrophysics); and it is just as mathematical as classical physics in its outward expression. But the mathematical symbols of those older theories could, as a rule, be thought of as being related—in a more or less unambiguous way—to certain elements of an independently existing reality.

The mathematical symbols of Quantum Mechanics—and here lies the essential difference—do not as a rule yield to any clear-cut interpretation of this kind. Whenever these symbols were interpreted in terms of an independent reality, it was invariably discovered that the interpretation could at best be only a partial model, accounting for only one aspect of the formalism or of its relationships with the data. And, what is worse, a literal belief in that tentative "realistic" interpretation sooner or later led to false predictions as regards the results of feasible experiments.

The golden rule for avoiding such mistakes is well known to physicists. All relevant information about the experimental set-up should be noted carefully and the Quantum Mechanical rules of calculations blindly applied, without attempting to form any mental picture or description of what the physical system under study actually is between the time it emerges from the apparatus producing it and the time it is measured.

HENCE THE PHYSICISTS have had to adapt themselves to a rather peculiar situation. On the one hand, Quantum Mechanics is for them a remarkably efficient predictive tool. It accounts for an incredible number of experimental facts covering the whole span of physical phenomena, and up to now it has not indeed made a single incorrect prediction. On the other hand, that formalism—though it lies at the heart of the natural sciences—does not seem able to provide us with any clear picture of what nature really is, independent of human means and purposes. No general talk of "a richer reality"—supposedly related (but in no strictly definable way) to the algorithms of the theory—can dissipate the feeling of uneasiness of those physicists who firmly believe that external reality both exists and can in principle be apprehended by the human mind.

In the 1920s this was the situation of a number of theorists, and especially Albert Einstein. For Einstein, all the previous successes of science—including those of Relativity—had amply demonstrated that the world is comprehensible: that "reality-in-itself", which is defined as being fully independent of all human activities, has a self-consistent structure that the human mind is able to discover, although it is not necessarily expressible in terms of our old familiar concepts.[1] If Quantum Mechanics does not provide us with a description of that structure, this must be evidence of its incompleteness. In other words, Quantum Mechanics resembles a microscope that lacks resolving power, and gives only a blurred image. What is needed is a more powerful, more complete instrument that will give a clearer, more detailed view of the object.

The haziness of the picture Quantum Mechanics gives of external reality is related to the principle that matter should be viewed as composed of waves in some cases and of particles in other cases, depending on what experiments we do. The theorists I have just mentioned believed that to consider matter as *in all cases* composed of both waves and particles would give a more detailed image, restoring conceptual clarity. Adding, at least conceptually, more parameters to those already present in the theory would restore the same kind of clarity (as Einstein, Louis de Broglie, and Bohm pointed out).

Unfortunately—this constituted the great intellectual drama of Einstein's later years—theories built up along these or similar lines turned out to be very unsatisfactory in several respects. In particular, they attained no degree of that mathematical elegance and simplicity that Einstein, for one, considered (at least implicitly) the great

[1] See e.g. P. A. Schilpp, ed., *Albert Einstein: Philosopher, Scientist* (Library of Living Philosophers, Evanston, Ill.); Gustav V. R. Born, *Einstein–Born Correspondence* (London, 1969); Albert Einstein in A. George, ed., *Louis de Broglie, physicien et penseur* (Albin Michel, Paris, 1953).

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criterion of truth. What is more, they utterly failed in predictive power. Though supposedly more detailed than ordinary Quantum Mechanics, either they suggested no new experiments or those they suggested did not corroborate their predictions.

IT IS QUITE REMARKABLE that most physicists immediately took the opposite standpoint to Einstein's, and did not consider his qualms serious or even valid. Their view was that in science experiment is all-important, and a formalism that correctly predicts experimental results (and never fails) is valid—so to speak—by definition. What upheld them in this attitude was undoubtedly (for several of them, like Heisenberg or Dirac, were first-class mathematicians) the possibility they found of using elegant mathematics for expressing, concisely and exactly, the rules composing that formalism. Perhaps for the first time in history, a new and avowedly "non-ontological" kind of mathematical physics made its appearance. A type of physics evolved whose essence, as before, consisted of equations and mathematical symbols but whose key symbols no longer referred to entities existing "in the world out there" but merely to potentially or actually observed data. Such a physics—that which we live with at the present time—only superficially resembles classical mathematical physics. Its use of advanced mathematics should not blind us to the fact that, conceptually, it is anchored on the notion of repeatable experiments rather than on the notion of any independently existing reality.[2]

THESE DISTINCTIONS may seem futile. For the layman, it goes without saying that if a scientific theory is confirmed by experiment then this shows that it is a faithful picture of "reality as it is." But are we so sure? Is not Aristotle's theory—according to which a body in motion spontaneously slows down if not submitted to any force—far better confirmed by all kinds of daily experiments than Galileo's theory whereby a body maintains the same velocity? Is not Epicurus's theory that the sun and the moon are of equal size "confirmed", in a way, both by "just looking", and by our direct observation of the occultations of the sun by the moon during an eclipse? Experiment is a difficult and complex procedure that always incorporates irreducible theoretical elements.

That is one reason why the new scientific realists do not accept that physics should be anchored to the unique notions of observation and experiment. The other reason is that they are not satisfied with merely observing regularities. They do not even feel satisfied when they have found some workable empirical rule for foreseeing phenomena. They require an explanation of observed regularities in terms of "something that exists." For example, they feel that had some pre-Newtonian wizard found a trick for predicting the time of return of all the comets and so on, even then Newton's work would have advanced our knowledge of the real structure of the world.

Not all realists are scientific realists. Some believe in the existence of primitive realities that lie outside the realm of science. By contrast the scientific realist believes in the validity of what may be called *the postulate of physical realism*—that the universe is structured according to a consistent mathematical scheme, and the human mind can (with the help of the scientific method) elaborate models that constitute continually closer approaches to that scheme, and whose succession in time constitutes a succession of progressively more detailed "blueprints" of reality.

Such was essentially Einstein's standpoint. And it led him, in particular, to believe that such an extremely general law as "the finite velocity of travel of all signals" should be considered as bearing on reality-in-itself. As we know, no signal can travel faster than light. (That general principle was first formulated by Einstein himself, and it is one of the main pillars of Relativity theory.) But what meaning should be given to the word "signal"? For Einstein there could be no doubt. Since Relativity theory bears on independent reality, *any* physical influence is a signal. Hence the principle that no physical influence whatsoever can travel faster than light. For further reference it is useful to give that principle a name. A widely acceptable one is "Einstein separability."

BY CONTRAST, the physicists who do not share these views may rightly be called "instrumentalists." That word is more often used to characterise a certain specific school of philosophers of science than to label theoretical physicists. But if we read the writings of Niels Bohr, who was the major contributor in explicating the guiding ideas of the main founders of Quantum Mechanics, we immediately observe that the word "instrumentalism" is really the most appropriate for qualifying his philosophy.[3] For, unquestionably, the notion of "experimental set-up" is central in all the texts in which Bohr strives—with complete success—to establish the generality, the consistency, and the lack of ambiguity of the whole predictive body of Quantum Mechanics. The

[2] See e.g. Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy*. Harper and Brothers (New York, 1958).

[3] Niels Bohr, *Phys. Rev. 48*. 696 (1935): "Quantum Physics and Philosophy", *Philosophy in the Mid-century*, ed. R. Klibansky, (La Nuova Italia Editrice, Florence, 1958).

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problem of the way the instrument itself works is not entirely overlooked by physicists of this school. A minority of them have taken it seriously enough to actually investigate it (with results that mainly exhibit its complexity). Even in Bohr's articles the problem is mentioned from time to time. But on the whole it was (and in a way still is) considered by the main body of physicists as of only marginal interest.

I SAY "the main body of physicists" because it is necessary to stress the disparity in numbers of the two groups of theorists that I have labelled "*realists*" and "*instrumentalists*." The group of those who shared Einstein's qualms intensely enough to really try to "do something about the problem" was very small. The group of those who, though sometimes paying lip-service to the notion of reality, actually followed the lines of instrumentalism embodied practically all the theorists from the 1920s up to the present. In fact, it is only fair to say that all the impressive advances of theoretical physics during that period have been achieved along their lines. And all the indications are that things will continue in the same way.

Still, the controversy persisted. It persisted, to a small extent, in the specialised literature; and it persisted more acutely in the individual minds of a great number of physicists, as, of course, it still does. But nowadays it is not quite so suppressed as in the past. We no longer abruptly tell young physicists that questions about "how things really are" should simply not be asked (at least in the field of microphysics). We no longer try to persuade them that they will appear hopelessly naïve if they exhibit such worries. (To some degree we must continue to warn them against the danger of focusing exclusively on those questions, on which progress is so slow.)

Unfortunately for Einstein, real advances in this field did not come until after his death. They resulted primarily from theoretical studies, but thanks to these studies, experiments could be conceived whose outcome is relevant to the debate. Metaphorically speaking, the problem is therefore brought down from the heavens of general philosophical speculation to the more terrestrial realm of ordinary experimental physics. Not that it is thereby completely solved as yet. But it is now a problem in experimental physics and should in principle be easier to solve than when it was confined to pure philosophy. Strangely enough, the average physicist is slower to bring experimental procedures to the point where they yield irrefutable information than most contemporary thinkers are to elaborate the truths they present as established. None of the experiments performed by physicists in that domain within the last decade can be considered completely crucial. All require considerable improvement before they can be viewed in this way. Nevertheless, even in their present stage, the convergence of their results yields extremely significant information.

LET ME briefly sketch the principle of these experiments.

They bear on measurements of correlation effects between two elementary particles (two protons or two photons) that have once interacted but are far apart at the time of measurement. When any object—a sheet of paper, for instance—is torn in two, a correlation exists as a rule between the properties of the two parts.

For any convexity of the cut in the right part of the paper there corresponds a concavity in the left part and conversely. This correlation persists when the two parts are removed to a distance from one another.

In many cases the same is true when a physical system decays into two particles, or when two particles temporarily interact. At least, a strict correlation is *observed* in many cases between the results of measuring the same entity on the two particles once they have separated. When such a correlation between measurement-results takes place on pairs of distant particles—and when the same correlation is observed on such a large batch of these pairs that it cannot be a mere chance event—we are unavoidably led to attribute it to some common cause ("concavity-convexity" in the paper) that has really pre-existed in each particle since they were produced in the interaction event. Do we have a clue here that enables us to make assertions about the *reality* of some properties of particles?

There are advantages in keeping the discussion out of the field of technicalities. Let me give an analogy.

Suppose that we have to deal with a sample of married couples, and that at 9 a.m. we separate husbands and wives, sending the men to Chichester and the women to Dorchester. At 5 p.m. our assistants in Chichester individually ask each man (*a*) his surname and (*b*) whether he considers that Mr Jeremy Thorpe received a fair trial. At 5.15 p.m. our assistants in Dorchester ask the women the same two questions. In both places, *Yes* or *No* must be answered to the second question. Next day we collect all the answers and compare those given by each couple to question (*b*).

Let us assume, for the sake of the argument, that some answers are *yes*, others are *no*; but that associated with each couple's name we find either two "yes's" or two "no's". From that remarkable result we can of course draw many fascinating sociological conclusions on the formation of common judgments in family life, and so on. But one interesting—though apparently trivial—

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conclusion is not especially sociological. It is simply that the individuals did not answer whimsically and at random. Before they were asked the questions, each of them, if not consciously then unconsciously, already had a definite opinion on the Thorpe case. If some or all of them had answered truly haphazardly and at random (as might have been the case if they were unacquainted with the English language, or unfamiliar with the Thorpe affair) then obviously there would have been some couples whose two answers would have differed.

Now is this really quite certain? It is—provided that no telephone line connecting Chichester and Dorchester could have been used by the men to communicate with their wives between 5 and 5.15 p.m. If such a line were available it might be that the men *did* answer at random (for all we know, perhaps they did not even understand English) and immediately phoned their wives, asking them to give the same answer.[4] If our conclusion is to be fully reliable we must ascertain that no such facility is available. In principle, one possibility is to carry out the tests in Chichester and Dorchester at exactly the same time: or at least with so short a time lag that even light could not travel fast enough to propagate from one of these towns to the other. If, accepting Einstein's separability principle, we believe that no physical influence whatsoever travels faster than light, then we are quite sure that our assumption is correct.

Obviously the argument is general. In the case of the couples it guarantees that, at least as soon as they are separated, each individual has a definite "property"—a property that *compels* the giving of a certain answer.

Similarly, in the case of batches of proton pairs in which, upon measurement, a strict correlation at distance is observed, the argument guarantees (again, as a consequence of Einstein's separability principle) that as soon as the protons emerge from their common source *each possesses a property that determines the result of the measurement yet to come.*

STRANGELY ENOUGH, the formalism of Quantum Mechanics contains no symbol corresponding to the property actually possessed by the two protons in question (although its mathematical rules do predict the correlation in the measurement results). However, according to our argument it appeared that one had no choice but to acknowledge the existence of the property; and to assert, in consequence, that the Quantum picture was incomplete. It seemed, moreover, that such a view was in essence quite acceptable (particularly if we acknowledge that the property can be modified by the very interaction of the proton with the measuring instrument). To be sure, it was useless for predicting how the proton would behave in future; but, as against this, it seemed obvious that it could not disrupt the agreement between predictions of the formalism and the observed facts.

SUCH (very roughly sketched) was for a long time the position of a great number of physicists. They considered that the view according to which systems can in some instances have properties not described by the Quantum Mechanical symbols was void of predictive power but, for that very reason, could be upheld without qualms whenever consistency of argument required it (as in the correlation case I have discussed). In short, they considered that view as being, in their language, *metaphysical* rather than physical. In this way they could reconcile Realism, Einstein separability, and the formalism of Quantum Mechanics.

THIS IS NOT the proper place for thorough discussion of all the delicate questions that these matters raise. Suffice it for me to note that the last 10 or 15 years have witnessed the end of the legitimacy of that comfortable intellectual attitude.

This evolution resulted from a number of advances in our detailed theoretical understanding of the foundations of Quantum Mechanics and more precisely from advances in our knowledge of certain essential limitations in the possibilities of attributing properties to systems. The most significant of these discoveries was that pioneered by J. S. Bell.[5]

Let us consider again batches of pairs of protons produced in those circumstances in which we have previously observed a strict correlation—but let us now carry out on them a different kind of experiment. Bell showed in principle that it is possible to devise an experiment in such a way that it constitutes a test: a test between the rules of Quantum Mechanics and the thesis that the protons in question each have definite properties which determine in advance the results of the measurements performed on them.[6] Since, as we have seen, that thesis is a consequence of the Einstein separability principle, the experiment also constitutes a test between that

[4] I apologise for the existence of a sexual discrimination in this example. It cannot, unfortunately, be removed by merely transposing the sexes!

[5] J. S. Bell, *Physics I* 195 (1964). B. d'Espagnat, ed., *Foundations of Quantum Mechanics*, Proceedings of the Enrico Fermi Summer School, course 49 (Academic Press, New York, 1971).

[6] Schematically, Bell's idea was to consider three such batches, or more. Within the first batch a physical quantity *a* is measured on one proton of each pair and another one, *b*, is measured on the other proton. The same operation is performed on the second and third batches, changing the measured quantities respectively to

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principle and Quantum Mechanics. Other physicists then showed the practical feasibility of such experiments.[7]

I must pass rapidly over the advances that these experiments made possible. Bell's experiment with protons was carried out in France in 1976: the result confirmed Quantum Mechanics. Before that, experiments based on the same general principles (but made with photon pairs instead of proton pairs) were carried out in the USA and in Italy, while in Britain the strict correlation that plays such a role in the argument was directly tested at large macroscopic distances (on photons). Although certain details remain to be checked, the indications in favour of Quantum Mechanics are now overwhelming.

It is thus apparent that—contrary to a widespread belief—the results reported here do *not* challenge Quantum Mechanics. Their interest lies elsewhere and is more subtle. To understand, it must be remembered that Quantum Mechanics is merely a set of rules for predicting what we shall see. Ordinarily a set of rules is compatible with a variety of possible detailed structures of the objects it applies to. Such a (conjectured) detailed structure is called an *interpretation*. Before Bell's work it could be thought that Quantum Mechanics was compatible with an underlying realistic structure incorporating Einstein's separability. Bell's theoretical work showed that this was not so. The experiments have shown us that it is Quantum Mechanics and not Einstein's separability that is correct. Given the experimental results, the interest of the body of works (both theoretical and experimental) reported here is obviously that it disproves Einstein's separability. And disproves it, for the first time, not on the basis of some particular interpretation—favoured for reasons of simplicity or elegance, but otherwise arbitrary—but on the basis of hard facts. Philosophically this is extremely important: Relativity Theory is experimentally verified; but one of its principles, if interpreted realistically (finite velocity of "influences", see above), is precisely Einstein's separability. The ways out of the difficulty are sketchily explored below.

WHAT KIND OF CONCLUSION is it possible to derive from these recent developments? It is important not to give too rash an answer, lest it be false. For example, although the Einstein separability principle is violated we should not hasten to conclude that we can, after all, communicate faster than light. In fact, the physicists have good theoretical reasons for believing that although faster-than-light "physical influences" have now been shown to "really exist" (in whatever sense the adverb "really" has, for any upholder of "realism"), yet these influences cannot be made use of for sending *messages* faster than light.

To the wireless engineer—or more generally to the man of action—this last remark will be disappointing. But to the philosopher, indeed to anyone who tries to acquire an up-to-date overall view about our knowledge of the world, it will, I think, sound interesting and perhaps even inspiring. For it renders unquestionable the existence of a considerable gap between empirical reality—the world of "phenomena" on which we can react and act—and whatever we may choose to call the "independently existing reality."

Of course such a distinction is traditional in some schools of philosophy; but, then, the philosophers of the past have said a great variety of things. Not all their assertions are compatible, hence some of them are surely wrong. Physicists, then, can help to discern which. But physics cannot replace philosophy: this is not its role, and there will presumably always remain a great many types of question on which science will remain silent. Nevertheless, physics has in the past been able to formulate clear-cut answers to questions that were previously considered to be in philosophy's realm, and this was considered extremely significant.

A similar situation is arising now. As long as its existence was announced merely by a few philosophers, the gap between empirical and "independently existing" reality was questionable. If we liked, we could still believe in the doctrine of a "physical realism" according to which there is a meaning in speaking of an independent reality that is, in principle, asymptotically approachable through our procedures of scientific investigation. This was precisely Einstein's view. The fact that the formalism of Quantum Mechanics was "inhospitable" to such a conception was not considered by him sufficient disproof of it. But were he alive today he would have to bow to the results reported here. Although it is rightly considered a fundamental law of physics, the law of finite speed of travel of all signals can no longer be regarded as referring to reality-in-itself. Hence if one postulates that reality-in-itself has a meaning, one must doubt that physics can ever approach that *Urstuff*.

WHAT PHILOSOPHY, THEN, should be chosen?

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a and *c*, and to *b* and *c*. The quantities are so chosen that the individual measurement results can only take one out of two values, say + and −. Bell would then show (*1*) that if all these measurement results were predetermined by properties of the protons, a certain inequality would hold true between the number of doubly positive results in the three cases (a pair corresponds to a doubly positive result if its two measurement results are +); and (*2*) that the rules of Quantum Mechanics predict a violation of that inequality.

For more details, see, e.g. B. d'Espagnat, "Quantum Theory and Reality", *Scientific American*, November 1979.

[7] J. F. Clauser, M. A. Horne, A. Shimony and R. A. Holt, (*Physical Review Letters 23*, 880 (1969).

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Fortunately, science does not dictate an answer. We have a choice of two at least.

In conformity with the great tradition of the most radical positivists we can—this is the first choice—take advantage of these new developments to argue that the notion of a reality existing independently of man has no meaning whatever.

What is it, then, that does have meaning? The answer is: observation, action, communicability, and so on. To take such a standpoint is in a way both very easy and, in some respects, rather uncomfortable. It is easy because you can, in many instances, effectively refute your opponent merely by showing him that the concepts he uses are meaningless (a daily practice in physics!). It is, at the same time, uncomfortable because you must then carefully avoid using these concepts, both in discussion with other people and also, if you are honest, in the inner debates you hold with yourself. . . .

The other possibility is to maintain one's belief in the notion of an independent reality. Such confidence can be backed up, if desired, by the inner necessity of accounting for the regularity of the phenomena observed by oneself and by others. This is, apparently, what Einstein felt. It is, I think erroneous to attribute that opinion of his to any religiosity *a priori*, as commentators often do. The argument about the regularities is in itself sufficiently convincing, in my opinion at least.

Paradoxically, the developments I have discussed may produce psychological encouragement for adhering to that second choice—a new realism. After all, they result in a statement about reality, albeit a negative one: the mere fact that we find them significant reveals anew our realism to ourselves. Yet, if we choose independent reality we must render it consistent with everything that we have learnt. And apparently we must therefore conclude that operational physics (with all its signals-travelling-no-faster-than-light, and so on) is at best an extremely crude approach to independent reality, and one which clearly leaves the most essential structures undescribed.

Can it be that no description is possible? Or that independent reality cannot be described by science? That independent reality is somehow *veiled*? These questions, fortunately, must be left open for others yet to come. . . .

The Bird

He was from Japan.
She was from England
by way of France,
Singapore, Hong Kong, Spain.
They were on a train
from Delhi to Amritsar.
He lay in the top bunk.
She lay in the lower bunk,
not thinking of anything.
There was no conversation.
Nothing passed between them.
Then the man said:
Do you know
how to make a bird?
She looked up bewildered—
why had he intruded—
then saw he held
a sheet of snow white paper
in his hand.
A paper bird, she said.
I'll teach you, he said.
Look, it's so easy.
This is what you do.
When the bird was ready,
he launched it through the window.
Nothing else was said.

Kaleem Omar

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MUSIC

The Dance of Death

On Mayhem, Pop, & Disco—By BENNY GREEN

WHEN during the 1979 spring general election campaign I read of the murder of a young man emerging from a politically sponsored disco at a London Polytechnic, my mind leapt back to the winter of 1946–7, when, in the prevailing Siberian, weather conditions I played the saxophone at various Polytechnic student dances without ever seeing anything much redder in tooth and claw than the occasional love-bite on the jugular. The student population of those days was much quieter and much, much shrewder than it later became. Instead of disrupting the curriculum in an idiotic attempt to make a career out of apprenticeship, it trudged doggedly, swathed in rationed clothing, into the groves of academe with the intention of acquiring as much cerebral equipment as it required for the stern task ahead: the burglarious assault on what were still often laughingly described in those days as the learned professions.

Our little band was a case in point. All its members apart from me were students at the Regent Street Polytechnic, where they reconciled an understandable desire to avoid going to work for as long as possible with the vague intention of becoming architects, solicitors, and teachers. What sort of musical noise we made it is too long ago for me to guess, but I think we thought we were pretty smart at the time, although handicapped by a burden which in my inexperience I considered to be extremely rare. Our leader was an electric guitarist called Concannon, who had familiarised himself with the Charlie Christian solos on the old Benny Goodman Sextet records thoroughly enough to lend his pronouncements some credence. However, circumstances had most cruelly conspired to undermine his authority; for Concannon was besotted with a girl Eng.Lit. student who exacted as her price for the devoted allegiance he craved the position of girl singer with the band. Nature had not endowed her for this role, and I can remember standing there on the little bandstand, leaning against the upright piano while she mangled *Why Don't You Do Right?* and bemoaning the prevalence of nepotism in amateur life, never suspecting that the same sort of thing only more so goes on in professional circles, where the ugliness of so many girl singers is explained by the fact that the bandleader's wife has protected her marital investment by insisting on selecting the applicant personally.

So far as political activism or extremist agitation was concerned at those student gatherings, such bizarre concepts never entered anyone's head. There was simply no further call for such measures, not since the world had at last managed to straighten itself out. The two great wars (the military one against Germany, the political one against the Tories) had been won, and life was now proceeding on its faintly anti-climactic way towards the utopian state of Onwardnupward. No breath of contention ever rippled the placid surface of that student backwater. Passion might flicker for a moment in the realignment of forces during the general excuse-me fox-trot, but otherwise life proceeded at those decorous hops with Turveydropsical formality. We would play *Tea for Two* and *Poor Butterfly*, with *Till Then* and *Paper Doll* for the public nuisances who made requests for something more topical; and during the interval we would retire to the tiny refreshment bar over in the far corner of the room to collect our emoluments, which consisted in their entirety of a cup of tea and two cream crackers apiece, underwritten by the Social Ways and Means Committee.

ALL THIS WOULD SEEM to suggest that in places where people dance, as in most other social environments, violence has increased dramatically

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since the end of the last war. So far as dances are concerned this is certainly not so. Violence has never been too difficult to find at dances; in my day it simply hadn't percolated down to the student life, that was all. Acts of violence, and occasionally even of homicide, have always been associated with places of popular entertainment. No doubt they always will be, and shocking though this may be to the theorist, it is a truism so hoary in the trade as to occasion little surprise from the inmates. No self-respecting dance hall would be without its bevy of bouncers (there is more than mere facetiousness at the heart of Ronnie Scott's antique pearl, "Business was so bad that they were chucking them IN"). I remember that when we were touring southern Ireland with Scott in 1954, we were put to play, in one country town, in a sort of box set high in the main wall of the building. Across the front of this hutch the management had thoughtfully placed a decorous veil of chicken-wire, so that the locals could enjoy target practice with a clear conscience, bouncing the chair-legs and empty bottles against the wire without fear of disturbing the musical accompaniment.

Such resource was a commonplace in my touring days. One time, at the Harpurhey Baths in south Manchester, not a venue remarkable for the respectful hush of its patrons, we had just moved into the last rites of the evening, our rendering of *Who's Taking You Home Tonight*, when there broke out in the far corner by the improvised bar what is always referred to in court the following morning as an affray. A party of sailors had arrived towards the end of the evening and proceeded to make up for lost time by drinking while dancing, a device which inevitably had degenerated into dancing while drinking. Our girl vocalist had just arrived at that juncture in the lyric where the possibilities of *double-entendre* are more or less limitless ("Who's the lucky boy who's going your way, to kiss you good-night in your doorway") when the Navy was fallen upon by a group of civilian gentlemen apparently goaded beyond endurance by the peacock splendour of the sailors' flapping bell-bottoms. Before we had reached the end of the first chorus, the dance floor was a heaving sea of dark blue and palais pallor whose wavelets broke upon a shore of squealing, squirming femininity. Scott, who had been playing in public since he was fourteen years old, and had thereby become familiar with every permutation of social lunacy and how best to counteract it, instantly modulated into G Major and began playing the National Anthem. The effect was impressive. The sailors, suddenly torn between occupational bellicosity and jingo patriotism, arrived at what seemed to me at the time an admirable compromise. The moment they recognised the tune they stood rigidly to attention, leaving their adversaries glaring at them in momentary bewilderment, adrenalin bubbling like molten lava out of every orifice. Once the anthem was over, all parties took up where they left off, by which time they were no longer our responsibility. When we climbed into our coach half-an-hour later en route for Kilmarnock or Newcastle or some such beauty spot, the New Elizabethans were still at it; and we never did hear who won.

The recollection of such unfinished symphonies is exasperating, but we did better one night at the Four Provinces ballroom in Dublin, where we lingered long enough to confirm that the young man who had been making such a racket right through our version of *Love is a Many-Splendoured Thing* had been inspired to do so by the fact that he had in some mysterious way been separated from the lower lobe of his left ear. Twenty-five years later I went back to Dublin to look for the Four Provinces. It was still there, magically shrunken in size but with its accoutrements intact, even down to the glitterball casting its fleeting dappled shadows on to the worn timbers below; the only concession to modernity was its rebaptism as The New Television Club.

THE POWER TO INCITE of those bellbottoms at Harpurhey is typical of most of the violence to be found in dance halls and clubs. Septic ego and rampant sexual ambition rather than political idealism are almost always at the heart of it. In another disco murder, in May 1978 in Norwood, the killer, who had sportingly laid into his victim with an iron bar, which he carried around for "protection at discos", said he had decided to attack a perfect stranger "for a bit of fun." But the most relevant fragment of evidence was that the victim was a well-known local dancer famed as "the human windmill", whose favourite relaxation was "solo disco dancing." In other words the murder was performed on behalf of the non-dancing classes against the virtuosi, not the other way round. There is little enough to be said for the footling punctilio of conventional ballroom dancing; but at least the narcissistic booby preoccupied with the deployment of his partner's sequins is far too dedicated to his questionable art to start hitting other people.

THE ROLE OF THE MUSICIAN at such crisis points has always been a highly privileged one, rather like that of the natives in the Boer War or the Swiss in any war. Let the storm-clouds gather, let the fighting rage, let mayhem commence, the musician is acknowledged as a neutral whose instrument is his shield. This touching codicil in the testament of every dance-hall hoodlum is part of the same logical system which dictates the necessity of the assault by the non-dancer on the dancer. People who take violence to dance-halls do so to draw

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attention to themselves, to put on a bit of a show for the young ladies they would otherwise be wooing in more terpsichorean terms. To a non-dancer the virtuoso dancing talent is an affront to his manhood, so he immobilises that talent by kicking its teeth in. But the musician is too hobbled by his own art to be much of a threat. Admittedly assaults are committed on persons indiscriminately, but then the musician is not a person at all, in which regard he is in the identical position of the Victorian domestic retainer who stood behind his master's dinner chair in marmoreal immobility while his lordship said to his guests, without a trace of conscious irony, "You may speak—we are alone."

The musician at a ballroom fracas is a cross between a functionary and an item of furniture; to hit him would be about as sensible as punching the wall. One time in Moss Side, Manchester, I played at a dance where the fighting became so vicious that the police beat a strategic retreat and returned half-an-hour later with a posse of Alsatian dogs who, to judge from the high seas of their saliva, hadn't eaten anybody all week. Those dogs tore into the fighting masses without laying so much as a single paw on the band.

It was the failure to appreciate this immunity of the working musician from all threat of bodily harm which once procured for me a job I badly needed. I had recently bought a baritone saxophone after several years of concentrating on the tenor saxophone, and naturally my apprentice efforts on the new instrument were bloodcurdling enough to put a music-lover off for life. And yet I had hardly possessed the instrument for long enough to default on the first hire-purchase payment before a prestigious bandleader called Ralph Sharon offered me a job with his touring orchestra, which I gladly accepted. I was mystified by his generosity which, I soon discovered, was qualified. After some weeks of existing on tour on a miserable pittance, a deputation consisting of the band *in toto* went to Sharon and demanded a rise of ten shillings a night. He then told us an admirably constructed and meticulously rehearsed cock-and-bull story about how all the contracts for the rest of the year were already signed and the moneys allocated, but that come January 1st we would all get our rise. Sharon sacked the lot of us on New Year's Eve.

A fellow of such infinite jest might reasonably be relied upon to divert the course of artistic history down some unexpected byways; and sure enough, when, a long time after, Sharon and I met on Broadway and I asked him why, all those years ago, he had given a job to a saxophonist so intent on playing out of tune, he gave me the most old-fashioned of looks and said he thought I knew the way things were. It appeared that in booking his string of one-nighters, Sharon had been obliged to accept the less desirable dates on the touring circuit, at venues where the musical appreciation of the inmates was generally rated somewhat lower than their tendencies to demolition. He had therefore decided to engage, not the best musicians he could find but the largest, hoping that when trouble reached the bandstand he could hide behind his phalanx of hired muscle. I was astonished by this explanation; but when I began to think about it, everything fell into place. I was a large young man in excellent physical condition. Perry, our alto player, was an ex-Petty Officer, and the second tenor was an ex-policeman called Allard, who had just completed a year of point duty in the stimulating environment of Millwall. But Sharon needn't have bothered, because apart from the fact that there wasn't a man in that orchestra who wouldn't gleefully have thrown him to the wolves in a crisis, no crisis ever developed, or was ever likely to. Even the audience of miners in a Nottinghamshire village who smashed up the joint one night in tempo to our rendition of *Tell Me I'm Forgiven* never came within a yard of the poverty-stricken minstrels puffing and sucking away on the bandstand.

IF SHARON had studied his jazz history he would have known that as a rule the safest place on the planet is on a bandstand in a dinner suit during an affray. It is no coincidence that the one considerable jazz musician to be rendered posthumous in a place of employment, Clarence Pinetop Smith, in a Chicago Masonic Hall in 1929, was removed purely by accident, having been unlucky enough to sit in the line of fire in a debate between two other gentlemen. The working musician, so far from being affrighted by such goings on, usually exults in them; they bring a little romance into his otherwise jaded existence. After half-a-century we can still sense the relish with which Willie the Lion Smith recounts an incident in his dance-hall career when the rigidities of strict-tempo conventions were relieved for a moment by some interesting adjustments to the flora and fauna. The Lion, one of the founding fathers of the Stride school of jazz piano, was leading a little band at the Capitol Palace in New York, on 139th Street and Lennox Avenue. His vocalist was a young lady called Lizzie Miles, who had conceived a deep passion for the then Light-Heavyweight Champion of the World. Smith explains:

> ". . . Lizzie's favourite friend was a guy named Battling Siki, who used to feature coming in with a little lion cub. So he turned the cub loose in the Capitol Palace this night and nobody in there could catch it. So Lizzie spoke to Siki in French and he went and got the cub and quietened it down. Then Rudolph Brown, the floor manager, said something to Siki, and Siki knocked him down, and Lizzie Miles was the only one who could get him off."

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Willie the Lion's amused approval of all these harmless high-jinks becomes more understandable when you remember that not even Siki (who would as soon punch you in the mouth as look at you, and whose favourite training was three minutes at the heavy bag, a euphemism for his wife) ever so much as laid a glove on the musicians. Whether lion cubs stand higher or lower in the scale of violence than iron bars is a nice point better left to the zoologists, but before the experts start making extravagant claims on behalf of the violence of the modern era, let them ponder the ancient evidence which comes drifting down to us from the augean stables of jazz prehistory. Danny Barker, a New Orleans guitarist in the emergent days of the music, has testified that

> "they would give a ball at the New Hall, which was the young men's charity hall, and every time they gave something there, the undertaker would be glad because there would be three or four bodies, and sometimes women's titties would be chopped off. They featured that in New Orleans. . . ."

Barker, who appears to have sustained an admirable cheeriness of spirit in the face of all this bizarre behaviour, also recalls the dance-hall battles royal,

> ". . . when they'd put five men in the ring, one in the centre, and blindfold them. The bell would be hit, and everybody would start punching. Whoever stayed the longest won the prize, five or ten dollars. These were men; you'd have to be an awful brave man to get in that ring."

IN BRITISH VENUES the mayhem has always tended to be more mundane; but whatever the sensibility best equipped for assessing the mood of a dance-hall, there is no question that the literary sensibility is quite the worst, reading sin and degradation into what is often nothing much more than sweat and dim lighting. I had a revealing proof of this in my very first professional job, at a ballroom called Sherry's, in Brighton in the summer of 1949.

This venue had already become known to me through Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*, where it is described in terms which might just possibly be justified in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. When I arrived at Sherry's, it was (thanks to Greene's lurid propaganda) in the expectation of riotous and spectacular dissipations. What I found was the most boring emporium in operation throughout the extent of the British Empire. At first I assumed that all the sin was covert, and that after I had worked there for a while it would suddenly reveal itself to me in one incandescent scarlet gesture. But it never did. One afternoon some girls from the chorus of a touring production of *White Horse Inn* came in for a busman's holiday; and one night a sun-tanned blonde called Sheila leaned over the balcony rail and made a suggestion so indecent that it deprived me of the presence of mind required to reject it. Otherwise Sherry's was the very soul of decorum, and the occasional drunken day-tripper or tearful usherette was about as far along the road to Sodom as we ever went. I assume that what Graham Greene took for the work of the devil was nothing more than the puritan conscience bridling at the sight of all that pointless frivolity.

IT WOULD BE JUST AS WRONG to assume that violence began with the popular dance-halls as to believe that it started with the discos. The tradition stretches back much further. Sociologists have conveniently forgotten that in the Golden Age of the Music Hall (when there were twenty shillings in the pound, but nobody had any) audiences would have no hesitation in wrecking the place if their sensibilities happened to be ruffled. In that underrated and neglected novel *All Our Yesterdays*, H. M. Tomlinson describes the scene at a Dockland Theatre of Varieties when a lady begins singing *Soldiers of the Queen* in defiance of the pro-Boer element in the house. The crowd turns on an agitator and a free fight quickly develops:

> "The pit and stalls began to move confusedly. Unhappy howls arose in the remote gallery, where it was known the next performance might be out of its view. The heads below me were now reversed, for the entertainment was in the opposite direction. I was looking at angry faces swarming. They were mounting the back of the seats and coming towards me. I dodged a missile in flight. . . . Eager advice was cried. 'Wring his neck.' We were told where we ought to kick him. The offender was propelled through the riot. . . . I was part of it, crunching over broken glass in a weight of straining bodies. 'You one of the swine?', demanded a whoop near me. I saw the fellow and wondered if I were his target, for his malignant squint misdirected his cry, and then he vanished as he slipped on glass. The torrent brawled down a corridor and shot me outside into the night. . . ."

The tradition has not died; it is the grandchildren of those wreckers who today go sauntering into discos with iron bars, bent on punitive action against anyone who trips the light fantastic a shade too fantastically.

DURING MY DAYS on the road I was introduced to another very curious aspect of the felonious nature of the musical life not usually noticed by armchair commentators. I mean the tendency of so many of its minions to drift into a

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kind of casual illegality which has nothing to do with Crime or Sin in the conventional sense, but simply consisted in my day of side-stepping the Inland Revenue, maintaining a cavalier attitude towards boarding-house debts, and generally regarding as communal property all artefacts but one's own.

Years ago in Ronnie Scott's band we used to have a boy singer called Baxter, whose apprenticeship as an itinerant fairground barker along the Kentish coast had left him with the religious tenet that anything which wasn't actually nailed down belonged to him by default. Your shirts, your tie, your shoe-polish, your comb, your hairbrush—all had a disturbing propensity to fly suddenly out of your possession into the limbo of lost causes; months later you would wander into Baxter's hotel room and there your lost items would be, lying on his dressing table. When you snatched them back indignantly, saying, "So that's what happened to my shirt/tie/shoe-polish/comb/hairbrush", Baxter, hardly pausing in his attempt to pick the lock on the wardrobe door to release the young lady who had flung herself inside in the mistaken belief that you were the night porter, used to reply, "It was here all the time, wasn't it? You could have had it back any time, couldn't you? . . ."

What is revealing about this morality is that it is one and the same with that of most successful recording companies. In the modern era, the giants of that piratical industry proceed on the assumption that as royalties are drifting through their hands in such vast amounts, and as many of the beneficiaries of those royalties are too stupid to know their rights or are being cozened by burglarious managers—and as accounting methods in such a fly-by-night industry are the soul of nebulosity anyway, and the life-span of so many young musical poseurs is hardly durable enough to encompass the gap between one annual accounting and the next—there is an excellent chance that those royalties, which are supposed to arrive in the recording-company coffers en route to the artistes, will never leave those coffers at all, and that fortunes will thereby accrue to the shareholders by default. Occasional demands by managers to examine the books in connection with ancient royalty arrears are usually met with a flustered guilty conscience, the slapping of hand on heart and the hasty pay-out of some arbitrary sum to forestall the stirring-up of murky waters. "It was here all the time, wasn't it? You could have had it at any time, couldn't you? . . ."

IT WAS IN the 1970s that the recording companies finally reached the logical conclusions towards which they had been drifting for so long. There was a time, still dimly recalled by some, when the fate of a performance was settled by its artistic merit. But gradually, as the companies became aware of one of the century's great social revolutions, they began to see that they were liberated at last from the tiresome need to bother with quality at all. This upheaval, which Tin Pan Alley was among the first to perceive, was the rise of a new consumer group, the uncommitted, unsophisticated, unthinking, often uneducated young. The effects of this convulsion are with us today, having transformed publishing, printing, fashion, advertising, the service industries, the political franchise, morality itself, as well as music. There had always been young people before; but this new group was the huckster's fondest dream come true, a group with spare cash but with no financial commitments. Soon mortgages and matrimony would knock its members out of the market, but by then there would be others. The children are always with us.

In such propitious circumstances, it would be crazy to bother with anything as silly as aesthetic standards. Where is the fool who would stuff caviar into tins of dog-food? So the standards of popular music have been debased to the point where they will be sure to gladden the hearts of the juvenile philistine. In purely abstract terms, the process is straightforward enough: you simply bring down the age of your hypothetical audience. Gershwin and Kern once wrote for grown-ups; the lions of the 1970s composed for inarticulate schoolchildren.

It follows that it would be excessively foolish to recruit executives hamstrung by their recollection of musical standards no longer relevant. What is the New Music anyway? Just a noise, the aural analogue of corn-flakes, baked beans, and car tyres. Today the major companies tend more and more to appoint as the captains of their industry men whose only previous connection with the fine arts has been to tell lies to gullible customers about the cosmic joys of flakes, beans and tyres. As we move into the 1980s, popular music has ceased to be an art at all, and has become instead just one more manufactured commodity to be packaged like any other. And as one of the easiest ways to pick an adolescent pocket is to distract its owner with airy piffle about the overthrow of the adults, the vocabulary of the New Music has harped on destruction, violence, the half-baked rhetoric of revolt. Loonies go on stage and wreck their own instruments, and fashionable nincompoops are reported as saying that they "took up the guitar because it looked like a useful weapon. . . ." Yet, when, as the inevitable concomitant of all this daft demagogy, real blood is spilt in a disco just as it is often spilled metaphorically in the lyrics of the recordings, the recording companies are suddenly nowhere to be seen. It has nothing to do with *them*.

IT IS OFTEN SAID in defence of the recording companies that their executives, technicians, publicists

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and artistes are sincere, but since the same excuse was once offered with equal justification on behalf of Genghis Khan and Attila the Hun, it is not easy to be very impressed by it. The world has always been full of noodles passionately convinced of their ability to tell chalk from cheese artistically speaking, and it is their very sincerity which tells so fatally against them; if only they were doing it for the money, they might be redeemed.

The professional musician discovers early in life that there are two subjects on which most people and all journalists consider themselves to be experts; those subjects are Sex and Music. In a breathless disco report published in *Life* Magazine, Albert Goldman makes passing references to Berlioz, Kafka, Thomas Wolfe and Maxwell Perkins. We learn that disco music "is precisely the kind of pop music towards which history has been driving ever since the first player-piano", followed by this statement: "The cine-disco concept album is a prophecy of the most important single development in the long history of the entertainment business. . . ." This is untrue; the most important single development in the long history of the entertainment business was the dollar. All that those statements really mean is that the pop-disco film *Saturday Night Fever* made a lot of money at the expense of millions of callow customers, a few of whom will be getting theirs one night at a disco dance.

And yet nothing much has changed. It is too easy to forget that for most of its life jazz-popular music was part of one social scene or another rooted in either immorality or illegality or both. From the brothels of New Orleans to the gin-mills and speak-easies of Chicago is progress of a sort, but not much more. Only when Benny Goodman, in the wake of Prohibition's repeal, stumbled on the kingdom of Swing at the Palomar Ballroom in 1935 was it easy for young people to hear good music without breaking the law. So far as the novelty of death-to-music is concerned, there was once a Dixieland band working around Capone's Chicago in the 1920s. The group's drummer, a Runyonesque sentimentalist called George Wettling, recalled that when the musicians saw guns being raised, they would duck: "One night at the Triangle Club, the boss was shot in the stomach, but we kept working. After that he walked sort of bent over. . . ."

Uncle Harry with a black border

The weather is with us: a kind of
long March of high winds and a
late frost. Grey light across flat
fields where the headroom is scarcely
enough to clear an upright corpse.
We are moving into the age of families:
personalities are everywhere, as
interchangeable as chainstore clothes.
Who saw him die? what did he say?
groping, groping for an appropriate lie
to build into stone. These are our
circles. A wood I walked through once:
rooks, rabbits, rats and a hedgehog
swinging from a low branch, whose
stench I knew before I saw them.
Spent cartridges on trodden ground
and around us a deafman's silence of
internal sounds. We are moving into
the age of funerals of old men whose
lives will neither burn nor rot into
useful loam. My black tie is worn
for the wake that will follow: in a
front room, behind curtains, up a road.

Edwin Brock

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DISCUSSION

Arguing about War & Peace

Thompson's "Ban-the-Bomb" Army—By ALUN CHALFONT

ONE OF THE most stimulating aspects of the current debate about nuclear weapons is its capacity to reveal genuine uncertainties in the minds of many of those engaged on it. Scientists, historians, and other academic figures of impressive intellectual pedigree are constrained, like the rest of us, to grope tentatively towards some kind of truth about one of the most perplexing of the moral problems which afflict the human condition. Some have even been obliged to abandon the reassuring belief that problems must by definition have solutions. Indeed the only people who seem to be secure in their monopoly of wisdom and insight on this matter are those who subscribe to the pure doctrine of disarmament. The only way to achieve disarmament, they assert with an air of profound wisdom, is to disarm; and if nuclear weapons are the most dangerous and destructive, then they should be disposed of first. The truly appalling difficulties which lie in the way of realising these simple aspirations are discounted or dismissed as the conspiracy of some vague, sinister, and malevolent establishment.

An even more radical formulation of this approach, especially popular in Britain, is the advocacy of unilateral nuclear disarmament. In its most uncomplicated form the argument is that Britain should in some way renounce all nuclear weapons as potential instruments of war. Some unilateralists seem to believe that other nations possessing these weapons will then see the error of their ways and follow our example. Others believe that even if they do not go as far as that, they will at least recognise our gesture to the extent of excluding us from their targeting arrangements in any future war.

This is, of course, not a new phenomenon. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has been advocating this policy with varying degrees of enthusiasm for twenty-five years or more. In the early 1960s the campaign entered a period of suspended animation, its supporters evidently believing that Harold Wilson's promise to "renegotiate" the Nassau Agreement with the United States (under which Britain had acquired its fleet of submarine-launched nuclear missiles) really meant that unilateral nuclear disarmament was at hand. The new awakening of the movement can be attributed to a series of policy statements by the present government confirming the growing suspicion that this was never a serious possibility. The decisions to embark upon a new generation of weapons, the *Trident* system, to replace the *Polaris* missiles acquired under the Nassau Agreement—to allow American cruise missiles to be based in the United Kingdom, and to allocate a modestly increased budget to civil defence arrangements—have combined to mobilise the unilateralists again.

Although a few new faces appear in the ranks—notably that of E. P. Thompson, an historian of the Marxist persuasion—the battle hymns have a familiar sound. Britain is to have nothing to do with nuclear weapons—no *Trident*, no cruise missiles, no American bases. "*Ban the Bomb*" has come back with a few added grace notes.

IT IS IMPORTANT that those who hold opposing views about our national security should not dismiss this as yet another shoddy artefact from the production line of our thriving protest industry. It is necessary to be aware of the kind of people who endorse the campaign for unilateral disarmament and to examine their credentials and their arguments with some care. Before doing so, however, it would be prudent to construct some frame of reference—to articulate some of the assumptions upon which any intelligent policies designed to promote national security within a stable international order must be based.

A useful point of departure is that perceptively

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identified by Professor Michael Howard in his reply (ENCOUNTER, November) to E. P. Thompson's polemical tract *Protest and Survive*.[1] International conflict, he writes, "is an ineluctable product of diversity of interests, perceptions and cultures . . . armed conflict is immanent in any international system." In other words although war can be avoided, or its effects mitigated, by patient and realistic statesmanship, it will not be eliminated from the conduct of international affairs simply because it is demonstrably cruel and destructive. Indeed it is difficult for anyone not engaged in the business of conjuring up dream worlds to conceive of a stable international system which would not ultimately rely in some way upon the sanction of force.

In this context, one of the primary functions of any government, not excluding our own, is to provide effective arrangements for national security, which must obviously include adequate military defence against any external attack. Before this can be done, the threat of any such attack must be identified and evaluated. It seems reasonable to suggest that the principal, indeed at present the only, external threat to the integrity of the United Kingdom and the survival of its political institutions comes from the Soviet Union. It is unnecessary here to catalogue in detail the various aspects of the immense military apparatus which has been constructed by the Russians in the last twenty years. Even allowing for various differences of assessment and interpretation, it is a matter of record that the Soviet Union spends on its military establishment a much higher proportion of its natural resources, both gross and per capita, than any other great power, and that it has demonstrated on more than one occasion its readiness to use its military strength ruthlessly and effectively in pursuit of its political aims.

In an article in *The Washington Quarterly* (Autumn 1979) Michael Howard suggested that this massive military capability was not *necessarily* evidence of aggressive intent. There were, he considered,

> "too many alternative explanations—atavistic Soviet suspicions of the outside world, the growing collusion of Soviet adversaries East and West, the primacy enjoyed by the military in Soviet bureaucratic processes, a determination to demonstrate super-power status in the only way open to her, above all an understandable determination that any further conflict will be fought out on the soil of her adversaries rather than her own. . . ."

This seems to me to be pursuing scholarly detachment beyond the call of duty; and when Professor Howard writes that "Soviet military capability *as such* is no more evidence of aggressive intent than is that of the United States" he is being either uncharacteristically naïve or wilfully provocative. He knows as well as anyone and better than most that in the business of threat analysis (or what we used to call at the Staff College, "appreciating the situation") capabilities and intentions are inseparable. Indeed it is often possible to make a valid assessment of intentions *only* from a close study of capabilities.

IN THE FIRST PLACE it is possible to assert as a general proposition that Soviet military strength is entirely disproportionate to any possible requirement for the territorial defence of the Soviet Union, especially in the light of the military capabilities of any potential invader. More specifically, any careful examination of the equipment, deployment, tactical doctrines and training methods of the Soviet armed forces seems clearly to establish an aggressive intent. For example, while the annual manoeuvres of the NATO forces in Europe are regularly based upon a battle-plan involving an early withdrawal in the face of a Soviet attack, followed by a defensive battle and a counter-attack, Soviet and Warsaw Pact military exercises include no such defensive phase. They are designed to train their formations in rapid advance, assault, river crossings, airborne operations ahead of the main force and the use of chemical weapons to neutralise defensive positions. It may be, of course, that this can be explained by the determination of Russians to fight "on the soil of her adversaries", but it would be unwise to draw too much comfort from such a theory.

Furthermore, the Soviet Union has consistently demonstrated that it is prepared to use its military capabilities aggressively in any situation in which it cannot be clearly and effectively deterred from doing so. It is sometimes argued that this expansionist tendency springs more from "pragmatism" and "opportunism" than from any strategic blueprint, and that it is part of a defensive mechanism designed to pre-empt and neutralise the activity of potential aggressors in the West and the Far East. Those who advance this argument apparently discount the evidence of a number of defectors and dissidents from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe who have provided persuasive, if not entirely conclusive, evidence of the existence of a grand design for global predominance. The most comprehensive documentation was provided by Major-General Sejna, a high official in the Czechoslovak Ministry of Defence, who handed over to British and American Intelligence documents describing a "Warsaw Pact Strategic Plan" setting out the long-term programme for Soviet expansion. The fact that the *KGB* took the trouble

[1] *Protest and Survive*. Edited by E. P. THOMPSON and DAN SMITH. Penguin, £1.50.

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to try to discredit General Sejna by a "disinformation operation" designed to cast doubt on his moral integrity and his motives for defection did little to diminish the significance of his information.

THE CONCLUSION of any prudent Western statesman must be (and Professor Howard's writing indicates that, in spite of his understandable preoccupation with academic objectivity, he would not dissent from this) that the strength of the Soviet Union, in the context of its known doctrines and policies, poses a real and growing threat to Western security. This is not necessarily the threat of a sudden assault by Warsaw Pact forces in Europe, although such a possibility should never be discounted. It may not even be a threat of direct military action at all. The danger is of a more classical kind, deriving from the *political* significance of military superiority. If the Soviet Union is permitted to acquire military forces both nuclear and conventional, of overwhelming strength and superiority, the mere *threat* of military action, whether implicit or explicit, might be enough to ensure that it could achieve virtually unlimited political aims without the need to move a single division across a national frontier.

In this context Professor Howard dismisses too readily the fears of some American observers that the Soviet Union might soon achieve the capacity for a pre-emptive strike against the United States. The concern of these people is not, as he suggests, that the Russians might be "100% successful" or be able to "take out every single land-based missile." No one with even a rudimentary knowledge of offensive and defensive weapons technology would seriously suggest any such thing. What *is* suggested is that the Soviet Union might be able to destroy a *large proportion* of the American land-based force, using only a small proportion of its own. The Russians would then be able to threaten with their large residual force to destroy American cities if the Americans retaliated with their bombers and submarine-launched missiles. Professor Howard himself is entitled to discount this possibility. Many of those in the United States who canvass it, however, are, like him, men of serious purpose and deep experience; and if it is true (as I believe it is) that the perceptions of adversaries in a confrontation of this kind are as important as objective realities, then the perception of Americans surely deserves the same serious attention as that of Russians.

ONE OF THE principal deficiencies of a great deal of strategic analysis in the West has traditionally been a failure to appreciate that Soviet and Western strategic doctrines are based upon entirely different assumptions, cultures, and habits of mind. This truth was underlined by an authoritative Russian source in *The Penkovsky Papers*, published in 1965.

> "One thing must be clearly understood. If someone were to hand to an American general, an English general, and a Soviet general the same set of objective facts and scientific data, with instructions that these facts and data must be accepted as unimpeachable, and an analysis made and conclusions drawn on the basis of them, it is possible that the American and the Englishman would reach similar conclusions—I don't know. But the Soviet general would arrive at conclusions which would be radically different from the other two. This is because, first of all, he begins from a completely different set of basic premises and preconceived ideas, namely, the Marxian concepts of the structure of society and the course of history. Second, the logical process in his mind is totally unlike that of his Western counterparts, because he uses Marxist dialectics, whereas they will use some form of deductive reasoning. Third, a different set of moral laws governs and restricts the behaviour of the Soviet. Fourth, the Soviet general's aims will be radically different from those of the American and the Englishman."

In a great deal of Western strategic analysis, such problems as the disarming strike, ballistic missile defence, selective targeting, modernisation of theatre nuclear weapons, and civil defence are dismissed too glibly on the basis that "no-one-can-win-a-nuclear-war." This statement, uttered with profound conviction by distinguished scientists, retired generals, and politicians of various factions, is promptly exploited by unilateralists, Soviet apologists, and the dottier fringes of the disarmament lobby. Yet it derives entirely from Western value judgments and finds no place in Russian military thinking. A study of the most authoritative strategic writing from the Soviet Union—that of Sokolovsky, Ivanov, Gorshkov, and Kulikov among others—indicates that the concept of "fighting and winning a nuclear war" is at the heart of Russian military doctrine. For the Soviet Union the only effective nuclear deterrent is one which confers upon them the option of fighting a successful nuclear war if deterrence should fail. One quotation—from Sokolovsky[2]—is enough by way of illustration.

> "We conclude that the Soviet Union's Armed Forces and those of the other socialist countries must be prepared above all to wage a war where both antagonists make use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, the key task of strategic leadership and theory is to determine the correct, com-

[2] V. D. Sokolovsky, *Soviety Military Strategy* (1963).

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pletely scientific solution to all the theoretical and practical questions related to the preparation and *conduct* of just such a war" (Author's italics).

BRITAIN, LIKE ANY OTHER advanced industrial country, must clearly ensure that it is able to deter the Russians from any course of action that would threaten our own national security. History has so far shown no way of achieving this without the possession of the classic deterrent against military attack—an effective military defence. If the case put forward by the advocates of unilateral nuclear disarmament is to be examined intelligently and dispassionately, it is necessary to understand first how the military defence of a medium-sized industrial nation like Britain is organised. The basic framework is collective security, resting upon the assumption that an alliance of like-minded nations is bound to offer a more effective defence than a number of individual states which could be picked off separately by a determined enemy. Britain has chosen therefore to maintain full membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. To this alliance it contributes conventional forces, composed of regular naval, army and air-force units supplemented by a limited reserve. The bulk of these forces are allocated to and fully integrated within the Alliance structure. Although they have certain crucial weaknesses of strength, deployment, and equipment they constitute an important and effective element of the conventional defences of the Alliance.

In addition Britain maintains a nuclear striking force consisting mainly of four Polaris submarines, each capable of striking at targets in the Soviet Union with 16 long-range missiles equipped with nuclear warheads in the megaton range. Of these four submarines, one is constantly on station at a high degree of combat readiness. These vessels and their missiles are normally assigned to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and their targets are determined by him. In a national emergency, however, it would be possible for the British Government unilaterally to resume the sole responsibility both for allocating the targets and firing the missiles.

This force, sometimes described as the independent nuclear deterrent, has, therefore, two distinct politico-military functions. In the first place it contributes to the overall power of the Allied nuclear arsenal, the principal function of which is to deter the Soviet Union from using its superior conventional forces to attack Western Europe by posing the implicit threat of an early resort by NATO to the use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, although it can be argued that the American nuclear capability is so enormous that the relatively small British contribution is numerically irrelevant, this is to ignore the important *psychological* importance to the Alliance of having a nuclear retaliatory capability outside the direct control of the United States. The second function is to deter the Soviet Union from directing a nuclear attack at the United Kingdom by posing the threat of instant *British* retaliation against Russian cities and military installations. These conventional and nuclear forces, if kept at adequate strength and an appropriate state of combat readiness; combine to provide an effective deterrent against Soviet attack or nuclear blackmail.

THOSE, LIKE E. P. Thompson, who advocate the unilateral renunciation of the nuclear element in this deterrent must therefore submit themselves to the intellectual discipline of constructing an alternative system of national security—that is to say, if they believe that the country should be defended at all. At this stage it is appropriate to consider the underlying motives and arguments of the unilateralist school. For it has to be said that a considerable number of those who advocate unilateral disarmament do so because they wish to see this country defenceless against the designs of the Soviet Union. To categorise them as "Communists" or "Marxists" is not an especially illuminating exercise. They are, however, incontrovertibly the protagonists of Soviet influence in our society and they ply their trade in many disguises—as teachers, professors, television producers, civil servants, and members of parliament. They manipulate and exploit the machinery of democracy with the single aim of destroying it. Through the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament they have brought their influence to bear upon a broad constituency ranging (as Michael Howard put it in his *Washington Quarterly* article) "from saintly men of penetrating intelligence to mindless fanatics impervious to reasoned argument. . . ."

There are, however, many who advocate unilateral disarmament from a depth of sincere conviction. They believe in the provision of effective arrangements for defence but argue that the British nuclear striking force is at best irrelevant and at worst potentially damaging to national security. The arguments which they deploy usually fall into one or more of three broad categories—moral, political, and economic.

The moral argument rests upon the proposition that nuclear weapons are so appallingly and indiscriminately destructive in their effect that to use them in war is immoral and therefore disproportionate to any national interest that might theoretically be secured by their use. This belief has impeccable antecedents in the traditional formulation of the doctrine of the just war—more specifically in the concepts of proportionality and

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discrimination. It is, of course, possible to argue that, in general, a nuclear weapon is no more immoral than any other weapon used to kill people. It is certainly difficult for a reasonable man to draw any useful distinction of this kind between nuclear weapons on the one hand and, on the other, chemical or micro-biological agents, the high explosives and incendiary bombs which were used to destroy Coventry, Dresden and Hamburg, or even the artillery shells which helped to reduce the abbey at Monte Cassino to a heap of rubble.

Nevertheless, it would be perverse to reject the proposition that nuclear weapons are different not merely in scale but in kind from other weapons of war; and that their *use* as weapons of mass destruction against civilian populations would be immoral. There remains, however, the question of whether the *threat* of their use as a deterrent is also immoral.

The position of many Christians is that the conditional intent in this case is no different from the action—that a threat to carry out an immoral act is as immoral as the act itself. This seems to me to take insufficient account of another important element in the doctrine of the just war—that concerning the justice of the aim. To use a simple everyday analogy, there would seem to be a valid moral distinction between the man who threatens violence in defence of his own person or property and the man who does so in the commission of robbery or rape. Similarly, in the doctrine of the just war (as Julian Lider points out in his book *On the Nature of War*) the justification most widely accepted throughout history and in all belief systems has been defence against aggression. The strategy of the Western alliance involves the threat of nuclear retaliation to deter a potential enemy from attacking the West, either with his own nuclear weapons or with his demonstrably superior conventional forces. The Soviet doctrine envisages that nuclear weapons might be used in *any* military conflict, including one in which their use became necessary to overcome an enemy's defences. In this context the moral objection to nuclear weapons as a deterrent seems to be less persuasive.

The political or strategic arguments for unilateral disarmament rest upon the proposition that the possession of nuclear weapons is intrinsically provocative, and that if Britain were to abandon them we would cease to be a target for nuclear attack. This ignores the inconvenient historical fact that on the only occasion so far on which nuclear weapons have been used in war, they were used against a country which had no capacity to retaliate. In any case, in the British context it is an obscure argument, since the British nuclear striking force is largely submarine-based. It is, therefore, invulnerable to a pre-emptive strike directed at the United Kingdom. The cosy assumption that unilateral disarmament would in itself provide us with nuclear sanctuary has very little basis in reality.

The economic arguments are even less convincing. The standard references to the "crippling cost of nuclear weapons" with the corollary, spoken or implicit, that they are taking bread out of the mouths of the poor, are not easy to reconcile with the fact that the cost of maintaining the Polaris force is £126 million a year—that is to say, one-fifth of 1% of the gross national product; or, to put it another way, substantially less than the annual budget of the London Borough of Camden. Much of the public misapprehension about the cost of nuclear weapons springs from the published estimates of the capital cost of a new generation of nuclear missiles—the *Trident* system—with which the Government proposes to replace *Polaris*. If the economic arguments were directed specifically to this project, they would carry more weight. It is certainly arguable that £5000 million might be more intelligently spent in the next ten years, if only in improvements to our severely degraded conventional forces. That is, however, a very different matter from the unilateral abandonment of the existing nuclear force. Furthermore, if the nuclear deterrent *were* to be abandoned, there would be powerful arguments for a substantially improved conventional capability which could not conceivably cost less than the running costs of the Polaris fleet.

THIS LEADS LOGICALLY to a series of questions which it is legitimate to put to those who advocate unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Is it proposed, having disposed of our nuclear deterrent, to remain within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation? Those, like the majority at the British Labour Party Conference in Blackpool in October, who believe this to be possible, have some serious moral and intellectual issues to resolve. The defensive strategy of NATO is based implicitly not only on the use of nuclear weapons, but in certain circumstances on the *first use* of nuclear weapons. There seems to be some confusion in the minds of people who wish to abandon a nuclear striking force designed principally to deter a nuclear attack on the United Kingdom, while remaining members of an alliance which is prepared to use nuclear weapons to defeat a conventional attack. It is difficult to comprehend a moral position which draws the line at being defended by British nuclear weapons but is prepared to be defended by those of the United States.

There are, of course, a number of unilateralists who follow their argument to its logical conclusion; withdrawal from the Western alliance, removal of American bases, and the adoption of a position of neutrality. They, in turn, have some hard questions

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to answer, this time of a more political and economic kind. If the stance is to be one of unarmed neutrality then it is unlikely that we should survive long as the only industrially developed country in the world without military defences. If, as seems more plausible, the neutrality is to be similar to that of Sweden, Switzerland, or Yugoslavia, then a very substantial defence budget will be required. As some kind of yardstick it might be worth noting that while Britain in 1980 devoted 10.7% of its government expenditure to defence, Switzerland's proportion was 18.9%—and Yugoslavia's 56.9%. Although, for obvious reasons, these figures are not directly comparable, they underline the fact that the renunciation of nuclear weapons does not necessarily lead to a greatly reduced expenditure on defence. Even on the more valid comparison of expenditure per head of the population, that of Sweden, the archetypal neutral, is almost exactly the same as our own.

THERE REMAINS however, the argument that unilateral disarmament by Britain would be an example which the other nuclear powers would follow. E. P. Thompson's refinement of this proposition concentrates upon the idea of European Nuclear Disarmament—a revival of the familiar concept of the European "Nuclear-free zone." The first thing to be said is that no one has yet produced the smallest scrap of evidence that any other nuclear power would follow Britain's example. Indeed all the evidence of over thirty years of arms control and disarmament negotiations suggests otherwise. It is, of course, entirely possible that the Soviet Union might find E. P. Thompson's END a reasonably attractive proposition. Since no member of the Warsaw Pact has any nuclear weapons, nor would they ever be allowed by the Soviet Union to have any, the withdrawal of *Russian* nuclear weapons from Eastern Europe into metropolitan Russia (whence they could still strike at targets throughout Western Europe) would be a small price to pay for the elimination of British and French nuclear weapons and the withdrawal of American theatre-based systems to the United States.

LEAVING ASIDE such bizarre asymmetrical arms control proposals, it is necessary to reiterate yet again the basic argument against nuclear disarmament in isolation.

In the extremely unlikely contingency that all nuclear powers, shamed by Britain's spectacular *beau geste*, dismantled their nuclear armouries, the military balance would at once be shifted towards the country or alliance possessing the greater conventional strength. It would be impossible without massive expenditure and convulsive political and social upheaval, for the West to offer any kind of effective defence—and therefore to pose any kind of credible deterrent—against the overwhelming power of the Warsaw Pact. It is for this reason that the West, throughout the long, tedious and frustrating years of disarmament and arms-control negotiations, has always adhered to the belief that nuclear disarmament cannot be considered in isolation from general and complete disarmament under international inspection and control. Until that becomes possible—and the possibility seems more remote than ever—it would be dangerously irresponsible to begin throwing away the one element in the equation which restores the balance and neutralises Russia's massive military establishment.

These are, it must be emphasised, arguments against unilateral or isolated nuclear disarmament. They are *not* arguments for the continuing and unlimited development of nuclear weapons. The three recent policy-decisions—*Trident*, Cruise missiles, and Civil Defence—are often condemned indiscriminately by unilateralists and others as evidence of the involvement of Britain in a continuing and disastrous "arms race." They are, in fact, three entirely different issues and they should be examined closely but separately.

The principal justification for the *Trident* decision is contained in one passage of the Defence Council memorandum, which is so crucial to the whole argument that it is worth quoting in full:

> "Apalling though any nuclear strike would be, the Government does not believe that our deterrent aim would be adequately met by a capability which offered only a low likelihood of striking home to key targets; or which posed the prospect of only a very small number of strikes; or which Soviet leaders could expect to ward off successfully from large areas of key importance to them."

In examining the implications of this statement, it is important to be clear about the nature of the "deterrent aim" and the "key targets." While there is obviously some flexibility in target selection (and no one expects the Government to be gratuitously specific in this respect), it is obvious that the concept of deterrence, in the case of the United Kingdom, does *not* rest upon the ability to destroy the potential enemy's own nuclear striking force. It is concerned, in the words of the memorandum, with posing a threat to key aspects of Soviet state power—in other words primarily to Russian cities, industries, and centres of administration.

In the present strategic context the kind of nuclear striking force which is needed for this retaliatory counter-city role is essentially different from that which would be required for counter-

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force purposes. It is here that the main weakness of the *Trident* case becomes apparent. One of the principal elements in the effectiveness or "credibility" of a nuclear deterrent is the degree of uncertainty which it creates in the mind of the potential aggressor; or, to use the words of the Government's own memorandum, "deterrence is a matter of perception, and perception by a potential adversary. . . ." In this context Russian leaders would be unlikely to "expect to ward off successfully" attacks on "large areas of key importance to them." The Soviet Union has one dubiously effective and obsolescent ballistic-missile defence-system around Moscow; the remainder of its cities are unprotected.

A British nuclear striking force, to be credible in Russian eyes, does not, therefore, require the range, accuracy, penetration and invulnerability necessary to destroy heavily protected targets with absolute certainty. It needs only to create a reasonable assumption in Russian *minds* that it could inflict intolerable damage on their centres of population. This threat could be effectively posed by the existing *Polaris* missiles, with their improved Chevaline technology, well into the next century, although it might be necessary to build new submarines to carry them. As the Government's memorandum declares:

> "a single *Polaris* submarine carries more explosive power than all the munitions used in World War II."

It is, therefore, perverse and provocative to expend £5,000 million on a weapons system which has all the advantages (increased range, independently targetable warheads, and reduced vulnerability to pre-emptive attack) appropriate to a counter-force role which is irrelevant to the British concept of deterrence, when, at a relatively modest cost, the Government could continue to satisfy its own criteria for effective deterrence without such an elaborate new missile system.

THE DECISION to agree to the stationing of American ground-launched cruise missiles in the United Kingdom is an entirely different matter.

Although I share Michael Howard's scepticism about the purely military value of this arrangement, it has a psychological importance for both the United States and its allies. For the Americans it symbolises the commitment of Western Europe to the Alliance. It is surely perverse that any European member of NATO should base its defence policy on the ultimate guarantee of America's nuclear power (which is what membership of the Alliance inevitably implies) while declining to afford bases for America's nuclear weapons. The fact that Norway has always pursued this policy—and that some West European countries have declined to provide bases for cruise missiles—makes it no more comprehensible. The only remotely plausible explanation for it is reluctance to present a target for a Russian pre-emptive strike—not an altogether admirable position for an ally, but at least politically intelligible. For Britain, however, even this argument makes no sense, since there have been American nuclear weapons on British soil for over thirty years, and the cruise missile would be no more immoral, provocative, or vulnerable than any of its predecessors.

It is not only the Americans who would derive reassurance from the willingness of their Allies to provide bases for the cruise missiles. For many years cities, military installations, and communications centres in Western Europe have been part of the Soviet target-plan for their medium-range nuclear missiles stationed in Eastern Europe and the western districts of the Soviet Union. Recently, the introduction of the *SS-20*, a mobile missile with a cluster of highly accurate individually-guided warheads, has substantially increased the capacity of the Russians to direct pre-emptive strikes against vital military targets (operational headquarters, airfields, communications centres, and defence systems). This is the equivalent in the European theatre of the disarming strike against America's land-based missiles. It would cripple the NATO defences in Western Europe, and leave the American President to decide whether to retaliate with his strategic forces, knowing that this in turn would invite the devastation of American cities. The cruise missile project is designed to insert an extra step in the ladder of escalation, allowing an Allied response short of strategic retaliation; and also to provide, in any future negotiations on nuclear arms control, a lever with which to persuade the Russians to eliminate the *SS*-20.

The principal weakness in the whole case is that the Russians cannot be guaranteed to abide by the rules of escalation formulated by the West. To believe that they will is to perpetuate the fallacy of the "limited battlefield nuclear exchange", which Lord Zuckerman demolished with clinical and final precision in the early 1960s. An American missile fired from Westphalia or Oxfordshire is as likely to invite retaliation on American cities as one fired from Montana or the North Atlantic. Cool objective assessments of this kind do not, however, invalidate or diminish the increased sense of security conferred upon many Europeans by the consciousness, however precariously derived, that West Europeans can dispose of theatre nuclear weapons which "match" those of the Soviet Union.

THE CIVIL DEFENCE ARGUMENT raises psychological issues of an even more profound kind. It can be argued with a wealth of emotive documentation that, especially in a country with the demographic characteristics of the United Kingdom, any

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attempt to protect the civilian population against nuclear attack is bound to fail. It seems to me, however, that—whether this country possesses nuclear weapons or not, and whether it is a member of NATO or not—an effective system of home defence is morally imperative on the grounds that no government can abdicate from the responsibility of at least *attempting* to protect its own citizens against attack—whether from nuclear missiles, chemical weapons or simple, old-fashioned high-explosives of the kind which flattened whole cities in World War II.

Furthermore, if Britain *has* nuclear weapons and *is* a member of NATO, it is because its government believes that it will in this way deter a potential enemy from attacking this country. It cannot, however, credibly pose the threat of retaliating against attack with its nuclear weapons or those of its allies, while manifestly failing to provide even rudimentary protection for its citizens against the enemy's own retaliation which will surely follow.

The idea that the provision of a civil defence system is in some way provocative is a bizarre hangover from the doctrine of "Mutual Assured Destruction" (MAD), in which it was assumed that a stable "balance of terror" existed in which the use of nuclear weapons had been tacitly forsworn by both sides. To embark on a civil defence programme was a sign that the country doing so was intending to repudiate this self-denying ordinance. Otherwise, why should it need to fear retaliation?

The suggestion that the protection of one's own people constitutes evidence of aggressive intent is surely one of the more eccentric propositions to surface even in the tortuous world of strategic analysis. That the Soviet Union has never subscribed to it is clearly demonstrated by its own substantial and expensive civil defence arrangements. (It is also of special interest in the context of the unilateralist-neutralist debate that among the most advanced civil defence systems in the world are those in Switzerland and Sweden.)

ARGUMENTS ABOUT *Trident*, cruise missiles, and civil defence, therefore, deserve careful, objective examination in their own right. They should not be, as they frequently are, bundled loosely together with the Unilateralist argument to give the impression that the world is divided into those who are "against" nuclear war and those who are "for" it. It is possible to disagree with the *Trident* decision, to be sceptical about the value of cruise missiles, and to have reservations about the expenditure of large sums of money on civil defence, while at the same time rejecting firmly the idea of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The whole complex of questions surrounding strategy, defence, deterrence, arms control and disarmament is immensely intricate and interrelated. It is simply not susceptible to instant solutions or to the language of protest. Those who advocate nuclear disarmament, unilateral or otherwise, have a duty, as have those who oppose it, to demonstrate how they propose—in the real, international climate, not in some Utopian dream world—to protect the people of this country against aggression and to ensure the survival of free political institutions.

THIS LEADS, FINALLY, to a matter requiring some delicacy—indeed the extreme delicacy of a soldier about to enter a minefield. It is necessary to say something about the credentials and objectivity of some of the advocates of unilateralism, and especially to consider the case of E. P. Thompson. It is important, in this debate as in any other, to make allowances for the background, education, prejudices, preoccupations and political philosophy of those taking part.

I have no doubt that many people will consider my own views, and some will indeed discount them, because they derive from a background of more than 20 years in the regular Army, some of it in military intelligence; four Fleet Street years as a defence correspondent; and six years as a Minister of State in the Foreign Office, mostly spent in negotiations on arms control and disarmament. Similarly, it is important to realise that there are a number of sincere people who have spent their lives promoting the causes of World Government and Universal Peace, and for whom the whole complicated technical and intellectual debate may be summed up in the classic phrase "My mind is made up—pray do not confuse me with the facts! . . ." Men like Lord Zuckerman and Professor Michael Howard, on the other hand, have made important and profoundly serious contributions to the debate—one from long experience in the field of national security as a kind of super-scientific civil servant and the other as a military historian of distinction with a special interest in strategic analysis. Both, incidentally, have had their views distorted and their opinions quoted out of context by unscrupulous propagandists. Field Marshals, Marshals of the Royal Air Force, Admirals of the Fleet, archbishops, university lecturers in economics, and Members of Parliament have all injected their special brand of expert knowledge. In most cases their motives have been impeccable, and their search for strict objectivity refracted only by their particular professional deformation.

E. P. Thompson, it seems to me, justifies a somewhat different diagnosis as the most prominent contemporary example of a somewhat different and

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more subtle influence. To call him a Marxist, as I have already suggested, is nowadays not especially illuminating, although he claims to be one, or, more specifically, to owe allegiance to the Marxist tradition. Certainly he openly advocates the destruction of the capitalist system and its replacement by "an alternative socialist logic." He evidently regards the "socialist" states of Eastern Europe as the beginnings of a new and better social order. None of this is especially sinister and, indeed, much of Thompson's writing is classical socialist utopianism, of the kind which suggests that universal peace is attainable by the simple expression of popular will. Mr Thompson, however, stops being a harmless academic when he irrupts into a world which he clearly does not understand. He may be, as Michael Howard asserts with the elaborate courtesy of one scholar to another, "so distinguished an historian . . . and so honourable and honest a man" that his views on a wide range of matters should be treated with proper respect. It is possible to argue, however, that these matters do not include strategic studies, defence policy, or the problems of arms control and disarmament.

In a television programme on which we appeared together recently, Mr Thompson made a strange assertion about tanks. "They are", he said "blind at night, half blind at day, magnificent targets and are increasingly becoming obsolescent means of war. . . ." This is surely the statement of someone totally out of touch with such modern military technology as thermal imaging and laser designation of targets. It seems unlikely, if tanks were obsolescent as means of war, that the Soviet Union which spends such a large proportion of its national resources on its military establishment would maintain 50,000 of them organised into 46 armoured divisions, and deploy, as they have recently done, additional tank units to the group of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe.

A single howler over modern methods of conventional warfare need not of course debar Mr Thompson from participating in a debate about nuclear weapons. It is, however, clear from everything he says and writes that he is equally innocent (one might even say ignorant) about such matters as Soviet military doctrine, the rationale of nuclear deterrence, the distinction between theatre and battlefield nuclear weapons, and the Russian approach to arms control negotiations. This is, in itself, no disgrace; it is, however, a serious handicap for someone proposing fundamental changes in the defence policies and national security arrangements of Britain and the West. It may be, of course, that Mr Thompson really is, as Michael Howard has suggested, attempting, with his polemical pyrotechnics, to terrify the people of this country into acquiescing in the extension of Soviet power and to hurry them "across the threshold from a posture of defence to one of surrender. . . ." Even if this is so, it will not, nor should it, debar Mr Thompson from publishing his views, although it is important to reflect that in the "socialist" societies which he so admires such freedom to dissent from the prevailing political wisdom would not be available to him.[3]

THOSE WHO have had any experience of rifle shooting will be familiar with the technique of "aiming off"—making allowances for such relevant factors of wind, distance, and temperature before pressing the trigger. Similarly, in the deadly serious, highly complicated business of ensuring national survival in the contemporary jungle of armed nation-states, in which there stalks one especially predatory animal, it is necessary to make allowances for the standard of knowledge and experience as well as the political allegiances of those who prescribe radical solutions. My own inclination would be to aim off some distance to the right to compensate for Mr Thompson and his associates.

[3] See, on these ideological matters, Leszek Kolakowski's moving polemic against E. P. Thompson, "My Correct Views on Everything", in ENCOUNTER (June 1975).

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Argentina: The Process & the Puzzle

By James Neilson

THAT PAUL THEROUX should have considered Argentina "travel-book country", the "end of the line", before he began his train journey from Boston to Patagonia was not surprising. What is surprising is that many Argentines also feel much the same way. From the moment 455 years ago when Pedro de Mendoza and his followers unsuccessfully tried to implant a settlement on the southern bank of the River Plate estuary where Buenos Aires sprawls now, the Europeans living here have suspected there may be something temporary about their sojourn. And even today, although Argentina must surely be regarded as one of Europe's more durable overseas ventures, the feeling persists. Talk about "national disintegration" comes easily to Argentine lips and foreign attention is gratefully accepted because, in a way, it confirms that Argentina really exists.

By all normal criteria, of course, it most certainly does. Visitors from abroad find themselves confronted by a very solid entity. Argentina is not just a banana republic, a cartographical fancy elevated to the rank of nation because that is the way the world is divided up in the late 20th century. It is a country to be reckoned with, and this is immediately apparent. Argentines, by and large, enjoy the highest standard of living in Latin America, and Buenos Aires has more in common with the great cities of the First World than with the ramshackle metropolises of the Third. Mile after mile of expensive blocks of flats, with most units costing at least 200,000 dollars (and many a great deal more), bear witness to a prosperity that is by no means restricted to a handful of families or the retainers of the currently successful political bosses. Indeed, although Buenos Aires and its suburbs have almost 10 million inhabitants poverty must be sought by the curious outsider; it is not thrust upon him. Argentina, moreover, is a nation of considerable intellectual achievement, with a pleiad of writers—many, unfortunately, in exile—that is the envy of the French. Its economy, while makeshift compared to the well-run machines of West Germany and Japan, is advanced by the standards of the underdeveloped world in which Argentina is too often included.

AND YET, DESPITE the outward swagger and material solidity, Argentina remains deeply insecure, haunted by nightmares and afflicted by traumata quite different from those that keep thoughtful Europeans awake at night. Argentines, beneath their brittle self-confidence, are troubled by a consciousness that Argentina, as they conceive it, is something that must be made, not something that already is. Argentines, no matter how nationalistic—and Argentines can be very nationalistic—do not take their country for granted. On the contrary, most seem to view it as a promising supply of raw material for a country they have yet to build. One result of this is that an astonishingly large proportion of Argentine mental life is lived in the future tense. Becoming is the thing, not being. Governments never take power in order to preserve the *status quo*, they take power to transform Argentina—the more thoroughly, it seems, the better. The Peronists (about whom more later) were swept into office by huge euphoric majorities in 1973 because they had convinced the electorate they would utterly change the country so that every Argentine would be able to enjoy the good life—a large car, a good house, an endless supply of cheap meat and cheap wine, free education and free medicine—which he thinks is his due. As though this were not enough, the Peronists also promised an "independent" economy and an immediate breakthrough to great-power status. Their dream of charging through the gates of the populist Eldorado failed dismally, needless to say. What Argentines got was four-digit inflation, a terrorist insurrection, and, to the surprise of nobody, a military coup in which the troops were euphorically welcomed back by the very same people who had jeered and spat at them just three years before. The military, as ambitious as the Peronists before them, promised to build Argentines a model up-to-date economy and install a model "strong, stable, authentic" democracy.

THERE ARE NO true conservatives in Argentina: the past simply fails to measure up to Argentine assessments of what their country should be. But there

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are plenty of people who can reasonably be called "reactionary." Argentina's military régime, led by the morose and rather shy General Jorge Rafael Videla, is inevitably deemed "reactionary" by most of the world press, and some of its specific attitudes are such as provoke sniggers wherever sophisticates gather. The generals, admirals, and air-force brigadiers who rule the country make no secret of their concern about the "decadence" of the Western world and are energetically doing their bit to keep sex, divorce, demagogy, and sloth at bay, in addition to "godless Marxism." But they are none the less as avid for change as the Peronists they replaced. They describe their system of government as "the Process." They hope the Argentine people can be induced to walk within its confines along what the interior minister, General Albano Harguindeguy, calls "the broad highway of the centre" to their chosen destination: democracy.

THE MILITARY ARGUE, and many quite moderate people agree, that Argentines are "not ready for democracy" yet and will therefore have to wait until they have shown the requisite aptitudes. The civilian politicians, however, are getting impatient, and insist, logically, that the only way to teach people to think like democrats is to give them the chance to learn the art by practice, not theory. Sincere democrats in the government are therefore impaled on an unpleasant dilemma. If they grant enough political freedom they will soon be forced out of office, and there is no guarantee at all that the elected government that followed them would not collapse, provoking yet another military coup. But the longer they stay in power, the less likely it will be that the civilians will be converted to democratic attitudes. Tyranny, as Argentines have discovered, breeds little tyrants, not tolerant and responsible democracts willing to abide by the rules of the parliamentary game. Be that as it may, it is probable that when the next president, General Roberto Viola, takes office in March 1981—barring another upheaval—the political tide will begin to rise once again and the military will have to beat another decorous retreat.

The officers clustered around Generals Videla and Viola, and their civilian aides, like to see themselves as progressive realists in closer touch with the Western political tradition than most of the professional politicos. This flattering conviction is not entirely unjustified. Much of the legislation they have promulgated by decree is reasonable, and on occasion even enlightened; and they would no doubt be delighted if they could refashion Argentina into a Latin American version of West Germany or even Great Britain. But, far too frequently, a crude authoritarianism gleams through their democratic outer garments. The commanders-in-chief of the three services are intolerant of criticism, and editors who print scathing remarks about their more outlandish statements get called in for a wigging. This military triumvirate, which holds real power in Argentina, has lately been showing a strong interest in setting the "limits of dissent." They are willing to put up with "constructive criticism", they manfully declare, but draw the line at the "destructive" comment journalists and civilian politicians seem to prefer, insisting that its real purpose is to prise open the doors to the Marxist menace.

The military leaders are most sensitive of all when their "human rights" record is questioned. This record, in fact, is quite appalling, but the Argentine government does have a point when it says it has been unfairly picked out for special treatment by much of the Western press: bad as its behaviour has been, it is no worse than that of the vast majority of governments represented in the United Nations. The government makes its case far less convincing, however, when it stridently asserts (like the foreign minister, Brigadier Carlos Washington Pastor) that no more human-rights organisations would be invited to "inspect" Argentina "because there are no human-rights violations here to investigate", or (like president-to-be General Viola) that human-rights violations "have not and could not take place in Argentina", or (like air-force-chief Brigadier Omar Graffigna) that "all those who raise the banner of human rights" are closet Marxists.

The truth of the matter seems to be—seems, because facts in this squalid zone of recent Argentine history are even more slippery than they are elsewhere—that just before and for years after the March 1976 *coup* the Argentine security forces seized thousands of people, perhaps as many as ten thousand, and did away with a large proportion of them, in addition to killing about four thousand in open combat during which neither side gave any quarter whatsoever. The plight of the "disappeared" has naturally attracted the sympathetic attention of a great many people around the world. Most of them are probably dead by now. Some may, as the military insist, be simply terrorists who have gone underground. But nobody believes this is true of all of them, just as nobody believes that all the "disappeared", who include known moderates (and even President Videla's first ambassador to Venezuela, Héctor Hidalgo Solá), were in league with the terrorists in any way. Many, it is clear, were merely people in such suspect professions as journalism, psychology, or university education—people whom the men in charge of the government's anti-terrorist squads believed, at a time of high hysteria, were the "intellectual authors of terrorism."

WHAT WENT WRONG is plain enough. When the

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power of representative institutions dissolved, the security forces slipped the leash and ran amok. The anti-terrorist campaign was not something carefully monitored by civilian authorities who ensured the security forces "had one hand tied behind their back", but a kind of military riot in which legality was seen as a terrorist trick and all means were made permissible by the end. The "dirty war", as even the military describe it, was highly effective from a military point of view, and something like it would probably happen should the security forces of any country escape civilian control and find they can make up their own rules as they go along. But politically it was a disaster. Instead of fighting large-scale terrorism in full public view when the public was cheering them on, the military, alarmed by the international response to events in Chile several years earlier, did their best to conceal what was happening, being greatly helped in this by the determination of most Argentines to look the other way. The military thus ensured that the facts about this minor civil war will hit the public when the military, their reputation damaged by years of governing a country where expectations flamboyantly soar above reality, have retreated and it is once again fashionable to despise them.

Although foreign criticism of the military destruction of the terrorist armies and anything else that got in their way has been less intense than what the Chilean régime of General Augusto Pinochet has had to face, it has been harsh enough to drive the Argentine government to the brink of paranoia and sometimes beyond. In their eyes they are the innocent victims of an "anti-Argentine campaign" run by Jimmy Carter, Amnesty International, the Left, and on occasion even the Vatican as well. But while many of the government's most virulent critics are less interested in human rights than in bashing a "right-wing military dictatorship", the military, by their deeds and by their clumsy attempts to justify them, brought most of their troubles on their own heads.

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING the Videla régime was obsessed with what is called "the national image." So great was their concern that they even took the ludicrous step of hiring an expensive public relations firm (Barston & Marsteller) to help them polish it. Few Argentines saw anything strange about this, however, because preoccupation with façade, and a lack of interest in substance, has long been an Argentine trait. Half-a-century ago José Ortega y Gasset was intrigued by the Argentine fascination with appearances. Looking like a "doctor"—a lawyer's titular prefix in Argentina—was, he discovered, every bit as good as having the knowledge and experience required to be one. So, naturally enough, Argentines tend to adopt pre-emptive identities both individually and collectively. To proclaim something convincingly is to achieve it. This demands effort, and explains the astoundingly bombastic nature of much Argentine rhetoric—the speeches of Winston Churchill are of a Lacedaemonian terseness when compared to the orotund outpourings of Argentines on public occasions. The disappointing state of the nation today is buried under the weight of a glittering tomorrow that is for all intents and purposes here already or, conversely, the blackness of today is contrasted with the splendour of a fictitious past.

A society where competitive self-assertion (and the nagging consciousness that claims can be seen through) is habitual is bound to be insecure. Hysteria always floats just beneath the amiable surface of Argentine life; and it comes bubbling up either in small ways, like the murderous inclinations of Argentine drivers, or in big ones, like the self-destructive dynamism of the Peronist movement. More benignly, it revealed itself in the astonishing celebrations that marked the 1978 World Soccer Cup, suitably won by Argentina, when it seemed the entire population had flooded the streets, waving flags and chanting its tribal joy. These must have been the biggest sporting celebrations the world has ever seen—but they were, of course, something more: a collective statement that we are here, we exist, please look at us and take us into account.

THIS URGE to belong explains the otherwise inexplicable Peronist movement—an ostensibly political phenomenon with an ideology so elastic it found room for just about everybody: Maoists, Trotskyites, Fascists, moderates, democrats, socialists, nationalists, the rich and the poor, the worker, the middle-class bank clerk, and the disgruntled scion of the land-owning "oligarchy." To become a "Peronist" it was only necessary to believe that if the Entire People (or at least a good part of it) strode happily in a certain direction it must be going somewhere worthwhile. Peronism was, in fact, largely a movement of all those who felt themselves, reasonably or not, excluded from the nation's political life in the periods when right-wing, and usually military, governments held power. It survived for so long—and without its founder and *Líder* it is unlikely to have much of a future—because General Juan Domingo Perón, a personally attractive man blessed with a second-rate mind, preferred to lead from behind and took care to keep his utterances as delphic as possible. When he died the centre of the Heath-Robinson political structure that had formed around him collapsed and his hapless widow, the former cabaret dancer Isabel, vainly tried to prevent it.

Peronism, swarming with contradictions, fell apart. By doing so it deprived Argentine political

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life of its biggest single component. Political life remains atomised. There is no Congress to give order to political forces and drama to politics, and the other parties (with the possible exception of the Radicals, who can lay claim to about a quarter of the vote) are as fissiparous as the Peronists. Disillusioned with public life, the vast majority of Argentines are in an apathetic drowse. Even the most fervent foe of military government cannot seriously pretend there is any great desire for elections. Political debate, robbed of the structures that give it practical significance, consists of portentous generalities—the economy is being destroyed, it is just about to thrive; materialism is more rampant than ever; the problem is essentially moral; the solution is more faith, a "change of mentality." Facts, among which one cannot include the abundant but unreliable statistics, are rare. The press connives with this state of affairs, tip-toeing around nasty realities and concerning itself for the most part with theory. Although the area of freedom granted writers and others is large in comparison with that available under most other dictatorships, the prudent stay away from the leftward side of the spectrum. Argentina has no big left-wing dailies at all, although there are a number of smaller left-wing publications which are sent without hindrance to subscribers by post but which do not turn up on the otherwise well-stocked newsstands. Even if they did, however, it is not certain they would find many buyers. Argentines were surfeited with the Left's political tracts between 1971 and 1975, and have yet to recover their appetites.

THE WIDESPREAD DISTASTE for politics among the educated, and the resigned indifference of "the masses" bode ill for Argentina's future and give "the Process" an air of unreality. Argentina's great problem has long been the inability of the many ingredients in the body politic to coalesce. Somehow the nation has failed to gel. Its institutions have proven fragile, collapsing at the first challenge, usually to almost universal applause. The admirable Constitution of 1853, characteristically drawn up after a closer study of other peoples' Constitutions than of the actual state of Argentina, remains an interesting, sometimes even an inspiring, document. But it is not the political bedrock it should be. The situation was ably summed up by the essayist Héctor Murena over twenty years ago, when he wrote:

> "There is no community in Argentina. We do not form a body, though we may form a conglomeration.... Instead of life Argentina has rancorous factious chaos, periodically illuminated by *coups d'état*. Each organ believes itself the whole, and functions as though it were more important than the whole. Is there any more succinct definition of sickness? Who is to blame? No one. Everyone."

Murena's despairing words are even more valid today than when he wrote them. Yesterday it was the Peronist movement that believed itself "the whole." Now it is the military and their friends.

THE LONGEST-RUNNING political debate in Argentina—it has been going on now for more than a century—pits "Nationalists" against "Liberals."

The nationalists resemble the Slavophiles of Czarist Russia, seeking national regeneration in the depths of "the People." The liberals are like the Westernisers, seeing the solution in the adoption of progressive European ways.

The Westernisers are now on top, as they have been ever since the fall of the *gaucho* chieftain, the "restorer of the laws", Juan Manuel de Rosas in 1852. (He is buried in Southampton cemetery.) Rosas was a nationalist, despised for his brutality by the frock-coated liberals but loved by the lower classes. And, although the Westernisers have generally had their way, imposing "orthodox" economic policies, drafting progressive legislation, and taking respectful heed of the latest trends of thought in Europe, they have never managed to dominate the country completely, and spasms of nationalism mark Argentina's confused history.

Just what the nationalists like, as opposed to what they dislike, is often hard to say. Some yearn for the garish exploits of the *gaucho* wars; others are ostentatiously Hispanic and Roman Catholic; a few hold Adolf Hitler in high esteem. They share a bitter resentment of the impingements of foreign cultures, particularly those of France, Great Britain and the United States. Less alarmingly, they often nurse memories of the quiet and orderly life in the provinces before the great torrent of immigration (mainly from Italy but including sizeable contingents from Spain and Eastern Europe, and even a smaller one from the British Isles) rolled over the country in the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th. They and the liberals each have their own lists of heroes who, like El Cid, are called upon to do battle again after their death. Only the Liberator, General José de San Martín, has his feet solidly planted in both camps. Perón was a Nationalist. The present government, somewhat reluctantly, is in the Liberal tradition.

IT IS OFTEN ARGUED by non-Argentines that what Argentina needs is a synthesis, with European reason and realism applied to Argentine matters rather than European categories, which rarely quite fit. If the Nationalist mistake has been to reject Europe too drastically, a puzzling thing to do given the fact that most Argentines number nothing but

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Europeans among their ancestors, the Liberal error has been to persist in trying to squeeze Argentina into the changing European moulds. Argentina, after all, differs from any European country as much as does the United States. In the 19th century, many cultivated Americans lamented this while the less cultivated exulted in their nation's uniqueness. But the outstanding material success of the American experiment effectively reduced the distortions Europe's magnetism caused, and Americans came to see themselves on their own terms. Argentina, however, was not as materially successful as "the Colossus of the North." Dreams of becoming "the Colossus of the South" soon seemed absurd to even the most ardent self-deceivers, so the allure of Europe, to which for many has now been added the allure of the United States, has remained. Generations of Argentines have felt themselves to be exiles, condemned to live in a half-barbarous land while their real roots were across the ocean. The Nationalists who reacted against this inevitably overdid things, thus convincing the Liberals that their stance was fully justified and their critics puerile. The Liberal view has often been summed up by Jorge Luis Borges, who repetitiously asks: "What do you expect me to do, pretend I am the last of the Mohicans?" Significantly, the Indians of Argentina are largely absent from the Nationalist vision. For the Nationalists, indeed, the past—edited as carefully as the Liberal past—matters less than the future.

BORGES HAS WON international fame not for his prose, the most transparent written in Spanish this century, but for the fantasy that suffuses his short stories and his playfully pedantic mock erudition.

In most of the West fantasy is a marginal genre; and fantasts, although more frequent now than they once were, are still relatively uncommon. In Argentina, however, they dominate the mainstream. It is difficult to find a serious Argentine work of fiction where red butterflies are not liable to emerge from an opened mouth, or time and place cannot suddenly become meaningless. Argentine writers have little time for realism or for delineating individual human personalities, as little as the creators of the tales of chivalry ever had. They spurn the everyday world that surrounds them, showing hardly any interest in delving into the mysteries of their unmapped society and its opaque institutions. They prefer to take refuge in a fairyland where everything is possible.

This flight from reality by virtually all Argentina's most sensitive and most talented literati reflects a refusal to come to grips with their own situation which is shared by the vast majority of their compatriots, and which leads government after government to behave as though it were dealing with an unreal nation and not a country that—for all its shortcomings—is made of flesh and blood, imprisoned by the same natural laws as the rest of humanity.

Sunday Army

On a day exhumed
from earth, mists,
exhaled leaves,
the band of the salvationists
transacts its muted music,
unurgent, flowerless.

Save us,
O Thou Great Redeemer.

We watchers
at the edge of the band
move our lips without singing.

The white and defiant sky
is reducing us all to the ranks of the sad.

A whiff of heavenly courtmartials
comes in on the waning wind.

Penelope Shuttle

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LETTERS

Hitler's "Irrationality"?

RAYMOND ARON, in his illuminating contribution to the June ENCOUNTER, appears to identify himself with the view held by Sebastian Haffner and others that Hitler's "wild declaration of war on the United States" is rationally incomprehensible. With due respect, it seems to me, on the contrary, that Haffner in his *Anmerkungen zu Hitler* indicates, *malgré lui*, that this declaration of war makes some sense within the general Hitlerian strategic concept.

Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 was launched the day after the start of the first powerful Soviet counter-offensive which caused immediate confusion in the German ranks and finally destroyed the prospect of an easy victory on the Eastern front. Haffner himself goes so far as to say that Hitler there and then lost any hope of the possibility of ultimate victory, though he continued to fight on so as to prolong the war and gain temporary superiority over his enemies.

An important point in this context is that the Soviet counter-offensive was made possible by the withdrawal of Siberian troops from what Haffner calls the Russo-Japanese military frontier in Manchuria. Stalin obviously had taken a calculated risk in thus re-deploying his forces; and it was, in these circumstances, not entirely irrational for Hitler to think that the fortunes of war might be turned again in his favour if Japan would open a second front against the USSR.

Hitler, as Haffner also points out, had previously shown considerable skill in maintaining neutrality towards the USA in the face of provocative acts by the American president. He changed his attitude immediately after Pearl Harbour, presumably in the expectation that (as a *quid pro quo*) Japan might declare war on its own worst enemy, the USSR. It is also true, of course, that American neutrality at that time had worn remarkably thin.

It would certainly have been more sensible for the *Führer* to discuss the matter in detail with his diplomats, generals, and political advisers and to make reasonably sure of Japan's intentions before adding the potentially powerful USA to the growing number of his official enemies. Haffner remarks that Hitler, sulking in his tent, refused to talk to any of his underlings who eventually learned of his epoch-making decision when he publicly addressed the Reichstag on 11 December. In fact, Ribbentrop seems to have had a talk with Hitler where he expressed doubts about the advisability of the proposed new policy; but his warnings were brusquely dismissed.

Using his famous intuition, Hitler may have acted as he did because he interpreted some vague Japanese promises as a commitment to enter the war against the USSR if he himself joined in against the Americans. His attitude in this respect was certainly rash, irresponsible, stupid—call it what you may—but it does not seem to have been entirely devoid of reason.

It could, of course, be argued that the declaration of war on America would in any case have been too high a price to pay (from his point of view) for obtaining Japan's whole-hearted support in the anti-Bolshevik crusade. However, the Japanese relief action might have come instantly; and the Germans might then, in spite of all, have finished the war on the Russian front before the Americans, with their British allies, were strong enough to risk a frontal attack on *Festung Europa*. At any rate, Hitler's thinking may well have been coloured by the experience of 1939 when the Western democracies, though formally at war, refrained from attacking Germany during the fateful weeks when her armies were engaged in Poland.

Presumably, we will never know for certain which were Hitler's real motives when he decided to declare war on the USA. However, Sebastian Haffner and Raymond Aron have both made it clear that it is possible to explain many of Hitler's political and strategic decisions without taking recourse to vague concepts such as "irrationality" and "mysticism." The vital decision of December 1941 is not necessarily an exception.

B. A. RAHMER

London

Victims

W. G. KRASNOW in ENCOUNTER, April 1980, refers to ". . . some 15,000,000 Soviet citizens (by the way, mostly Russian muzhiks) annihilated. . . ."

This is grossly misleading. Russians (including Russian muzhiks) have suffered less than other ethnocultural groups in the Soviet Union under Russian Communist rule. 10,000,000 Ukrainian peasants died during the famine of 1932–33. In Stalin's time, as now, Ukrainians in the concentration camps substantially exceed Russians absolutely and proportionately.

E. E. FORBES-MITCHELL

Toronto, Canada

Theology & Irish Politics

THE Revd Professor Hanson protests too much at the identification of religion and politics which he finds in Northern Ireland. Is it not endemic in England, most notably in his own Church? Dr Edward Norman has shown convincingly that the leaders of the Church of England have been infatuated for the past hundred years with the progressive politics of the liberal intelligentsia. The compassionate and seemingly innocent "social gospel" of the 1920s and 1930s has led to the "liberation theology" of today which identifies Christianity with revolutionary Marxist politics. I have yet to hear any of our Church leaders dissociating themselves from this hideous perversion.

Quite the contrary: Mr Hanson's final proof of the wickedness of identifying religion and politics is that it has led, in Northern Ireland, to terrorism. But has it not had the same consequence in England? Does not the British Council of Churches, whose president is the Archbishop of Canterbury, openly collect money for the World Council of Churches' "Combat Racism" fund? And was it not this fund that continuously gave financial and moral support to Rhodesian terrorist groups even after these groups had committed such massacres as the murder of eight Pentecostal missionaries in 1978? The Church of England could at any time have shown the abhorrence of terrorism which Mr Hanson rightly feels

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by withdrawing from the WCC. But it didn't. The only Church to have done so is the Presbyterian Church of Northern Ireland!

The Church of England did not condemn terrorism in Rhodesia because it approved the terrorists' aim of overthrowing an allegedly racist and illegal government. In other words, it was prepared to use any means to gain its political ends.

And it is precisely this substitution of political for religious objectives which Mr Hanson condemns in the churches of Northern Ireland. This is nothing new in our history and we who are Cromwell's countrymen should not be unduly surprised by it. But Mr Hanson should first make sure that his own slate is clean before he admonishes others for the dirt on theirs.

BERNARD SMITH

Gidea Park
Essex

PROFESSOR HANSON reprimands his former flock with a vigour reminiscent of St Paul [ENCOUNTER, October 1980]. But the apostle thought it his duty to visit those whom he chastised: Professor Hanson abandoned his sheep after only three years as Bishop of Clogher.

R. F. V. HEUSTON

Brownstown, Navan
Co. Meath

THE ANALOGIES which Mr Smith takes for comparing the behaviour of the Church of England in political affairs with those of the denominations in Northern Ireland are so remote as to show the hollowness of his argument. To say that the leaders of the Church of England "have been infatuated for the last 100 years with the progressive politics of the liberal intelligentsia" is so violent a generalisation as to be ridiculous. Even Dr Edward Norman, for all his considerable exaggeration, would not maintain that statement without qualification. To go on to imply that the Church of England today wholeheartedly supports "Liberation Theology" is only a further extension of the absurd. Again, to compare the contribution of the Church of England to a World Council of Churches fund part of which may at times, without the intention of the contributors, have supported some people who could be called "terrorists" in Africa, to the steady and unyielding identification of Protestantism and Unionism indulged in by the Protestant churches in Ireland for a century is equally outrageous. Even this small lapse (if it were lapse) received considerable criticism within the Church of England itself, and not least in its General Synod. The withdrawal by the Presbyterian Church of Ireland from the W.C.C. is a measure, not of the purity of its hands, but of its deplorable sectarianism. Finally, to suggest that the Church of England "was prepared to use any means to gain its political ends" is to indulge in language so violently exaggerated as to make argument with its user almost futile.

If Professor Heuston chooses to reproach me in this manner, it is open to him to do so, but I hope he will compare me with all the other Irish bishops who have been offered Chairs in British universities.

R. P. C. HANSON

University of Manchester

Atrocities

IS NOT Herb Greer [ENCOUNTER, August-September] rather hard on Amnesty International? As a regular reader of their publications I do not observe that their aim is to retail atrocity stories, selectively or otherwise. If they tried to cover the whole range of atrocities practised in the modern world, they would have to dissipate the limited resources and energies which they in fact direct to the fate of political prisoners denied those human rights that are defined in international conventions and in the constitutions of their own countries. These people are often tortured and even more often held in prison for such long periods as to ruin their health.

I should guess that the inhumanities of Kampuchea are a good deal more basic, and that it may be some time before accredited instances of violations of human rights as defined above become known. But I am astonished that Greer seems not to know of Amnesty International's work for Russian dissidents and of the considerable succour that it has been able to bring them. He might have a look at Leonid Plyushch's book, *History's Carnival*, for a start.

LUCY MAIR

London

I DID NOT suggest that Amnesty International ought to cover all atrocities everywhere. I said they were very selective about "accreditation." Also, Professor Mair's qualification as to political prisoners just happens to be violated by AI in Ulster: more selectivity.

Professor Mair's odd claim that the "inhumanities" in Kampuchea are somehow "more basic " than violations of Human Rights is a fine example of the confusion which exists on this subject. I know of no sound definition for Human Rights. Lists have been published from time to time; but these are nothing more than arbitrary assertions.

In fact AI's "violations of Human Rights" are almost exclusively instances of physical maltreatment (e.g. torture, killing, imprisonment, etc., etc.). AI's function among the human species approximates that of the RSPCA among animals in Britain; but AI's propaganda is rather less catholic.

HERB GREER

London

On Expelling Blunt

IN THE November 1980 number of ENCOUNTER, Sir Kenneth Dover defended the British Academy's vote on the "Blunt Affair" with rare elegance. The views of his friends on private morality are also interesting and show the survival of the old English dislike of vindictiveness, which has served the nation so well for centuries.

There are just two points which I feel could bear further debate by qualified persons in ENCOUNTER.

1. From the international, as opposed to the purely domestic, point of view, can the public actions of an eminent institution labelled "British" be regarded as quite apolitical? Given modern communications, the vote on July 3rd inevitably had some political consequences, and this debate is one of them.

In all public services there is a purely practical objection to employing anyone who has committed any kind

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of peccadillo in the past, whether repented and paid for or not. This is the possibility of blackmail if it should be mentioned at an awkward moment. There is no escape from this practical disadvantage, and failure to appreciate it shows a certain irresponsibility in public affairs.

2. Sir Kenneth made a startling statement which I am in no position to dispute.

> "No Western academy has ever elected Fellows for their moral virtues or expelled them for their vices. Is it suggested that we should now start a purge of adulterers and bullies, censuring and expelling the proud, the mean and the callous?

If true, the implications of this statement (and the question following from it) certainly need to be ventilated.

If academies are also teaching institutions, although the young have to learn, among other things, to defend themselves against wickedness, should known deceivers be sponsored to teach them?

Can any valid teaching (or language) be completely separated from religion, morals, and politics? Is the attempt to do this the cause of the present discredit of British and other Western academic institutions?

N. L. LIVINGSTONE

Co. Galway

SIR KENNETH DOVER in his comment [ENCOUNTER, November 1980] on "The Blunt Affair" confuses two terms. He quotes a young woman who said "But surely—he'd repented!"—and he himself describes Professor Anthony Blunt as a "man who says that he regrets doing what he did."

The young woman is saying one thing and Sir Kenneth another and Sir Kenneth is right as far as that goes. Professor Blunt has said that he *regrets* doing what he did. He has shown no obvious sign of *repenting*.

The distinction between "regret" and "repentance" is a profound one but the most simple example in a case like this is that a person may *regret* having done something when he has been caught, which he would not have *repented* had he not been caught.

If Anthony Blunt has repented, his colleagues should forgive him. Of course he may have repented, but since they had (as I understand it) no evidence to that effect, and open acknowledgement of repentance would seem in such a case important, they were right to ask for his resignation, as he was right to give it.

TIMOTHY BEAUMONT

House of Lords
Westminster

I FEEL the greatest sympathy with Sir Kenneth Dover in having had to handle, as President of the British Academy, the awkward problem presented by the Blunt case. But the note on the matter which he has published in your columns (November 1980) does not, in my opinion, bring out the central issue.

Sir Kenneth's main point seems to be that the Academy has no call to pronounce on questions which are not academic. But although it is an academic body, the Academy is also a national institution, which receives public money. Spies for Russia are the enemies of the British nation, and have done all in their power to destroy it. Their activities have led to the death of certain British agents, so that they are accomplices in murder.

HUGH LLOYD-JONES

Christ Church
Oxford

Bambi & Josephine

RUTH PADEL'S ARTICLE "Saddled with Ginger" [ENCOUNTER, November] refers to *Bambi*, written by Siegmund Salzmann under his pen-name Felix Salten. Under this name he wrote other animal stories and many novels; but he also wrote, anonymously, *Josephine Mutzenbacher*, which became the most famous pornographic book in the German language of the early 20th century. It was printed as a *Privatdruck*, was widely distributed, widely read and often reprinted.

Your readers might be interested to learn that Miss Padel's very original argument is reinforced by the fact that here again, written by a man, is a female voice saying "*I*": the story being the childhood reminiscences of an aged Viennese prostitute, describing her introduction to sex. . . .

W. W. BROWN

Reading

"Sex-Linguistics"

I WAS INTERESTED in the letter from Professor August Closs on "Sex-Linguistics" (November), listing many German names for "woman", down the ages. The word "*wip*" reminded me of Professor Closs's edition of the medieval poem *Tristan* by Gottfried von Strassburg; where, after the courtly, formal opening, the language is pared down to the heart of the tale:

> *Ein man, ein wip; ein wip, ein man,*
> *Tristan, Isôt; Isôt, Tristan.*

Could more be conveyed in two lines ever written?

URSULA CODRINGTON

Grosvenor, Bath

Omelettes

Mr Labedz in the February issue of ENCOUNTER has once again revived the old phrase that one cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs. But this recipe produces only an old-fashioned, reactionary omelette. To make a revolutionary omelette, one must start by killing the chicken.

There can be no criticism that such a procedure will lead to a shortage of eggs because blame for the lack of a finished omelette can easily be placed on American imperialism abetted by its fascist lackeys, including, obviously, the editors of, contributors to, and readers of ENCOUNTER.

DAVID HUDSON

Department of History
California State University
Fresno, California

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Life & Letters Today

London

ENTERTAINMENT: **Lord Butler is not only the best Prime Minister we never had but also the most entertaining political writer of our age. He describes his happy talks with Macmillan at Admiralty House while No 10 was being renovated.**

"I used to be summoned before dinner and nearly always found the Prime Minister with a classical book on his lap. Sometimes it was Seneca, sometimes Plutarch.

"One day when I saw a volume of Livy fall on the floor I said, 'You really cannot be reading that. It is more suitable for the sixth form of schools.' . . ."

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

New York

FROM "STING" TO "SCAM": **"Those poor Washington politicians, trapped in a sting by F.B.I. men in disguise, were scammed. . . ."**

Robert Redford and Paul Newman taught us the meaning of the verb "to sting", *but who among all those FBI agents dressed up as the Sheiks of Araby will instruct us on the meaning of "scam"?*

Neither Random House nor the American Heritage dictionaries has the answer, and the best that the New York Police Dept. can offer is that it comes from "scamps", a 19th-century description of people running con games—presumably an earlier version of Three Card Monte. Thus, "scamp's game", later and certainly more euphoniously, "scam games."

Webster's International (2nd edition), however, suggests that "scam" is probably of Scandinavian origin and offers the Old Norse skomm—*to hurt, or to shame, from which today there remains only the local Swedish dialect word,* skamm, *meaning evil.*

But, says Webster, see also "shame." That is precisely what the Oxford, or New English Dictionary (1914, edited by Sir James Murray), proposes: scam, *obsolete form of* shame *(variant,* scaum*).*

Whatever would become of Scrabble without those variants? For NED "shame" comes, without a doubt, from the Teutonic root skam *and is to be found in its numerous arrangements in Old High German, Gothic and Old English meaning, variously, to be ashamed, to be in a state of genuine disgrace, to be an infamous man or woman, or simply disgraced.*

In 8th-century Beowulf it was scamizan. *When Luke wrote his gospel in 950 it was* sceome *(XIV, 9). By the 14th century Chaucer was warning of the lover's schame and in the* Comedy of Errors *(and much else besides) Shakespeare cried of "these slanders, and this open shame."*

To scam: to con, to play the scamp's game, the scam game, to create shame. But why is the dealer in Three Card Monte a "springer", why are the lookouts "slides" and what makes a go-between a "shill"?

NEW YORK POST

London

POPULARITY: **Mrs Margaret Thatcher has come second in the popularity poll of waxwork political figures at Madame Tussauds in London. But she has come third in the "Figures-you-hate-and-fear" category of the survey. She ran behind Hitler and Idi Amin, but in front of Dracula and Jack the Ripper.**

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

TASTEFUL WORDS: *Describe the flavour of your favourite whisky.*

Almost impossible isn't it? The lack of a language for taste always has been a drawback, not only for drinkers, but for whisky producers.

It is difficult for them to describe the merits, faults and subtleties of their products to each other, compile new blends for export and compare flavour differences between genuine Scotch and its counterparts.

But now the "Food Science Department" of Strathclyde University has come up with an idea.

It's a whisky taste language, comprising 26 words and the chemical formulae they represent.

After analysing the most common expressions used by whisky tasters in the industry—words like "nutty . . . spicy . . . sulphury . . . fruity . . . pungent . . . sour . . . soapy" the researchers compiled a list of words that can be used to describe anything from neutral spirit to a strong malt whisky. Chemical formulae were then selected which best reflected the meaning of each word.

The words and chemicals are now with whisky distillers and blenders for their comments.

DAILY MAIL

New York

STAND UP AND GENUFLECT: *Congressman John Anderson, the Independent Presidential candidate, has promised that, if elected, he would apologise to Iran.*

But he said that he would refuse to bow to any unreasonable demands by Ayatollah Khomeini to obtain the release of the 53 American hostages in Iran.

"I am not going to stand up and genuflect to the Ayatollah", he added.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Washington

"RACISM"!: Edgar Lockwood, director of the Washington Office on Africa, which lobbied against lifting sanctions, said that most senators are "not well informed on Africa generally." "A black is a black", he said that senators would say, arguing that since Bishop Muzorewa was a black, they were willing to lift sanctions. "There's a certain inherent racism there", Mr. Lockwood said.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

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